2 WHAT IS POLITICS? An Interpretation of Aristotle's *Politics*

Aristotle was born in 384 B.C. in the seaport town of Stagira in Thrace. His father was Nicomachus, a court physician to the royal family of Macedon. Aristotle came to Athens in 367 and entered the school of Plato where he remained until the latter's death in 347. He lived in Assos in the Troad (347-344), in Lesbos (344-342), and for about six years at the Macedonian capital of Pella (342-336), during which time his famed association with the young Alexander occurred. In 335 he returned to Athens where he founded his own school, the Lyceum. In the anti-Macedonian reaction that swept Athens and other Greek cities after the death of Alexander in 323, Aristole was indicted for impiety and fled to Chalcis in Euboea (his mother's birthplace), reportedly saying that "Athens must not sin a second time against philosophy." He died there not long afterward, in 322.

Aristotle's political philosophy is to be found primarily in two books: the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics.* An evidently earlier and less definitive work is the *Eudemian Ethics,* the fourth, fifth, and sixth books of which are identical with the fifth, sixth, and seventh books of the *Nicomachean Ethics.* An exhaustive study of Aristotle's political philosophy would include a careful examination of similarities and differences in the two ethical treatises, as well as consideration of a smaller and less scientific work called by the tradition *Magna Moralia.* Finally, we must note the famous 158 constitutions (or regimes) said to have been collected by Aristotle, according to ancient catalogues, and which are referred to in the last paragraph of the *Nicomachean Ethics.* Of these, only one has survived. Fortunately, it is the Athenian constitution or, more accurately, a constitutional history of Athens accompanied by an account of the constitution in Aristotle's time. In this essay we will limit ourselves, in the main to Aristotle's *Politics,* with such supplementary consideration of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as is necessary to establish the context within which the political treatise (in the narrower sense of the word "political") occurs

The subject of Aristotle's *Politics* is the *polis* or political community. There is no single English word that will translate *polis,* and to

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understand why is indispensable to any introduction to Aristotle's political philosophy. The *Politics* begins with a definition of the *polis,* and the student who reads this as a definition of the "state," with all the connotations alien to Aristotle in that expression, is apt to be estranged forever from his thought. Our word "politics," although a noun, is the plural form of the adjective "politic." A parallel instance is the word "athletics," formed from the adjective "athletic." Now athletics is what athletes do. The Greek noun *athlētēs*—from which athletic and athletics derived—survives virtually unaltered in our language. We know what athletics is because we know what an athlete is. The latter is a concrete subject of observation while the former is an abstract general characterization of his activities. But the Greek noun *polis,* which does not survive in our language, is to politics what athlete is to athletics. Politics, the abstract general characterization derived from the Greek survives, but *polis,* the concrete subject, does not.

As we have observed, the usual translation of *polis* is "state."[1] But *polis* and "state" are not even logical equivalents. According to Aristotle, "community" is the genus and "political community" a species. The specifying characteristic of the political community or *polis* is that it is the community that includes all other human communities, while itself being included by none. Because of its all-inclusiveness, the *polis* includes or assimilates within its own end or purpose the end or purpose of every other form of community. The scope of the state is quite different, as we see when we consider the term "state" as it occurs familiarly today in such antinomies as "the individual and the state," "church and state," or "state and society." It is clear that the state, whether separated from or combined with a church, is never understood to include by itself, as an element of its own definition, the function of a church. The purpose of a state, as state, is never understood to be that of providing for the eternal welfare of its citizens or subjects, however much it may assist a church or churches in providing for it. If the functions of church and state happen to be united in the same body, as for example in the Vatican or the British queen in Parliament, they are still distinct from each other. They are as distinct as, to use an Aristotelian example, the functions of a tragic chorus are distinct from those of a comic chorus, although the human beings who comprise the two choruses may be the same. The decisive consideration is this: the end or function of the state—e.g., to secure the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—when added to the end or function of the church—e.g., to direct men to their eternal welfare—constitute an aggregate of ends or functions different from that of either taken

[1] Frequently this is rendered "city-state," meaning a very small state with an urban center. This, however, only compounds confusion, because it implies that a *polis* is a particular kind of state.

separately. But the concept of the *polis* is such that there is no process of addition by which one could alter, in either a quantitative or a qualitative sense, its end or function.

It is a common error to suppose that, because the *polis* includes all other communities, the end or function of the *polis* is simply the aggregate of the ends of the communities it embraces, with the addition of the end we attribute to the state. This error is expressed in the attempt to explain the comprehensiveness of the *polis* by saying that it "is" simultaneously church and state. In this view, the reason why the end of the *polis* cannot be altered by any process of addition is that it is by definition the sum of the ends it embraces. But the *polis,* while it embraces the ends of all lesser forms of community, is not the sum of them, because it is in no sense an aggregate. Aristotle sometimes conceives of the *polis* upon the analogy of a living organism.[2] Just as the function of the human organism cannot be conceived as the sum of the functions of heart, liver, hand, and brain, so one cannot conceive of the function of the *polis* as the sum of any parts or components. The function of the human organism is not a sum for the same reason that it cannot be divided and allocated among its parts. It is a whole of which heart, liver, hand, and brain are parts. But it is not a mathematical whole. Without all the parts the whole cannot perform its function, or cannot perform it so well; but the function performed by the whole is a function of the whole alone. What we mean by a whole man can never be resolved into his physiological components.

Polis, we have said, is logically not the equivalent of "state" because *polis* is the species of community which includes by definition all other (and hence lesser) forms of community. "State" is not the comprehensive form of community, if indeed it can be understood as a species of the genus community at all.[3] The state, and the law of the state, can certainly be better understood as a species of contract. By the *polis* is meant a radically different relationship of the political community to human gregariousness than is meant by these contemporary terms. The *polis* cannot *be* simultaneously church and state because the definition of the *polis* implies a quasi-organic relationship between the subordinate functions of subordinate associations within the *polis* to the superordinate function of the *polis,* a relationship which excludes the very idea of what we understand by either church or state.

As both "church" and "state" are excluded from what Aristotle

[2] One must, however, be careful not to identify Aristotle's use of such analogy with the organismic theories of the nineteenth century, which attribute to the state actual qualities of a real organism.

[3] See below, p. 47, for the Sophist Lycophron's definition of law; from W. D. Ross (ed.), Aristotelis *Politica,* Oxford Classical Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 1280^{b} 10.

understands by *polis,* so also are "society" and "individual." The term "society" as used in present-day social science, may be like *polis*—as "state" is not—in that it is frequently taken to refer to the totality of the forms of human association. But it is never conceived to be a unified authoritative whole, as is the *polis.* Sometimes society is conceived simply as an aggregate of all forms of community within a specified locality, sometimes as an organic or quasi-organic unity. But whatever the unity attributed to society, it is not the kind of unity which gives its identity to the *polis.* For the unity of the *polis* is like that of the human organism, in that it is the result of a capacity for deliberate rational purpose. Whatever rationality the eye of the beholder may discover in society, it is never deliberate rational purpose; for the presence of such purpose necessitates government, and the very idea of society was conceived to express the idea of human gregariousness without particular reference to government.

What we mean today by "individual" is logically implied by, and is correlative with, "state," "church," and "society," but is utterly incongruent with *polis.* Modern individualism conceives each human being to have a sphere of privacy wherein are generated activities and ends which the state, as state, can never order or direct to their completion and perfection. Because of this essential incompetence of the state in certain areas, other forms of community, of which the church is the most familiar and convenient, although by no means the sole example, are both possible and necessary. There is a familiar aphorism today, that the state exists for the individual and not the individual for the state. The most common characterization of totalitarianism in the Western world is that it reverses this order and treats the individual as if he exists for the state. One must not, in approaching Aristotle, attempt to characterize his thought in terms of such an aphorism, because it is not possible to substitute *polis* for state. It makes no more sense to say that the *polis* exists for the citizen, or the citizen for the *polis,* than to say that the mind exists for the man or the man for the mind. According to Aristotle man exists ultimately for the sake of the good life, and the good life is the same for one man and for a *polis.* The means-end relationship we predicate of state and individual does not subsist between man and *polis,* and all inferences which assume such a relationship are false.

The *Politics* begins by defining the *polis* as follows:

> Since we see that every *polis* is a community, and that every community is established for the sake of some good—since all do everything for the sake of what seems to them good—it is clear that as all communities aim at some good, the one that does so in the highest degree and aims at the most authoritative of

> all goods is the community which is the most authoritative of all and embraces all others: this is the one called the *polis* or the political community.[4]

What are the elements of this definition? First there is this syllogism: Every *polis* is a community; every community aims at some good; therefore every *polis* aims at some good. The minor premise is itself the conclusion of an implied syllogism: Every community is constituted by common action; every action aims at some good; therefore every community aims at some good. To understand the definition of the *polis* we must then grasp with utmost firmness the meaning and the implications of the proposition that every action aims at or intends some good.

This proposition applies, in Aristotle's whole doctrine (or perhaps we should say, doctrine of the whole), to all motion in the universe, but we will consider it only as it refers to voluntary human action. Every human agent acts voluntarily only as he intends something that, insofar as it is a motive for him to act, appears to him to be something good. A hungry man eats because relieving his hunger seems to him to be good. The man who would eat when he is hungry must work that he may have food. Work that may itself not otherwise be desired is nonetheless motivated by a seeming good, namely, food. The student studies that he may learn and learns that he may know. His end is knowledge, which may be desired for its own sake or for the sake of some work which it will enable him to do. This work may be desired for its own sake, or for its consequences (e.g., money or food), or for both. The thief may steal even as the honest man works, that he may eat. Stealing may be evil as honest work is good, but the good for the sake of which the one steals and the other works may nonetheless be the same, namely, eating. In short, all human action originates in desire for something which moves to action by its appearance of desirability or goodness. Desire implies a sense of deficiency in the agent; that which is desired appears to the agent as capable of overcoming the sense of deficiency. As such, it appears to him as good, and becomes thereby the motive for voluntary action.

The question arises, however, as to what is the relationship among the many things that are desired as good. The answer given in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* with an elaborateness and subtlety which we cannot begin to reproduce, runs somewhat as follows. There are three kinds of ends. First, those which are purely instrumental, which are desired only for their consequences and never for themselves. Money is the most conspicuous example; medicinal drugs is another. Second, there are those good things which would be desired even if they had no further consequences, but in fact are desired as well because they contribute to

[4] Ibid., 1252^a 1-6 (trans. Harry V. Jaffa).

the acquisition of other goods. Seeing and hearing are examples of faculties whose activities we delight in for themselves, but which are also means to nearly all the other good things in life, as indeed is health altogether. Honor, pleasure, reason, and every virtue are also things which we would choose, and do choose, for their own sakes, but which are also chosen for their further consequences or advantages. The final class of good is that which is chosen only for its own sake and never for the sake of anything else. Of these three classes it is clear that the merely instrumental, as such, are less valuable than those which are final, meaning thereby the goods which are or can be chosen for their own sakes; and the more final an object of choice is, in comparison with one which is either entirely or partly instrumental, the more inherently valuable it is.

Intrinsic to the distinction between instrumental and final ends and vital to its comprehension is the distinction between ends which are activities and ends which are products. A chair is an end apart from the activity of carpentering which produced it. Singing is both an activity for making music and music itself. In such cases as the carpentering, Aristotle says, it is the nature of the products to be better than the activity. The skill of the carpenter precedes in time the chair which is produced by that skill. But the chair (and other products of carpentering) are desired before carpentering is desired, and the development of the skill of carpentering (insofar as it is a result of deliberate voluntary action) is a consequence of the desire for its products. It is the utility of such products as chairs which is the final cause of carpentering, even as carpentering is the efficient cause of chairs. Because the chairs stand before carpentering in the order of final causality, they enjoy priority in the order of excellence. Now there are many actions, arts, and sciences, and their ends also are many. Sometimes these ends appear unrelated, but sometimes they are evidently related to each other by their relation to a common end. Bridle-making and the other arts of equipping horses fall under the art of riding; but riding falls under the military art, or strategy. The end of strategy is victory in war, and it is the excellence of this end which is the final cause of the excellence of strategy, and of the lesser excellences of the lesser arts which it has, directly or indirectly, called into existence, and which serve it. The same is true of health in relation to medicine and of medicine in relation to the subordinate arts which serve it. And so with buildings in relation to architecture in relation to, e.g., bricklaying and interior decorating.

Now we see that victory, health, and buildings are final in relation to the arts that serve them, and all are worthy of choice for their own sake: victory for the evils of defeat it averts and for the honor it achieves; health for the evils of disease which it averts and for the healthy activity it engenders; buildings for the discomforts they avert and for the comforts

they provide. But victory is valuable not only for the foregoing reasons, but far more because of the activities having nothing to do with war which can be pursued only in peace and freedom. The man would be mad who would go to war for the sake of the honor of victory, if peace and freedom were attainable without war. Peace and freedom are ends more final than victory; the intrinsic value of victory derives from peace and freedom no less than the value of weapons derives from the value of victory. And so the question arises, What is the cause of the value of peace and freedom? Or, to put the question in its most comprehensive form, as Aristotle does, Is there not something always desirable for its own sake and never for the sake of something else? If there is then this must be the thing or, if there be more than one such, these must be the things for the sake of which everything else is done.

Now Aristotle maintains that there is one such thing, which stands in the same relation to all the activities of human life as the target stands in relation to the activity of the archer. It is the mark toward which everything we do is ultimately directed, and only as we can see that mark (or as we are directed by those who do see it) can our lives be said to have direction. The ground of Aristotle's opinion is twofold. First, if there were no absolutely final cause of human action, then everything would be desired for the sake of something else and there would be no term or end of human desire. Each human choice, we recall, initiates a movement to overcome some deficiency in the agent, e.g., eating to overcome hunger, learning to overcome ignorance. It is a movement from incompletion toward completion, from imperfection toward perfection. But if each deliberate action were nothing but the way to another action, the notion of progress from lesser to greater finality would be pure illusion. The only actual finality would be an infinite regress, and life would be essentially purposeless and vain. But human action originates in the human soul, the cause of which is nature. Aristotle holds that nature does nothing in vain, and action originating in the soul would be vain if it could not terminate short of infinity. Therefore there must be a final attainable end of all human action. This argument, it will be perceived, depends upon Aristotle's doctrine of nature. But there is another argument as well, namely, that universal opinion testifies to the existence of such an end. And common opinion, to the extent that it is uncontradicted and internally consistent, is always authoritative for Aristotle.[5] All people speak of happiness and all mean by happiness just such a thing as we have specified as a final end: something for the sake of which every good thing can be chosen—including those good things like honor, virtue, and health which can be chosen for their own sakes—but which is never itself chosen for the

[5] Cf. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1145b 1ff.

sake of anything else. To possess happiness means to lack nothing desirable, to be self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency does not imply a solitary condition, but rather whatever a man needs to be happy: parents, children, friends, and fellow citizens. Happiness, unlike other goods, is not to be enumerated *among* good things. To be healthy *and* wealthy *and* wise is better than to be any one or two of these things. But one cannot add wealth or wisdom to happiness to make happiness better, because happiness implies the presence of all other good things in whatever measure is sufficient to define their excellence. Whatever positive measure of goodness can be ascribed to health or wealth or wisdom derives from its ability to contribute to happiness.

We cannot do more here than allude to the substantive meaning of happiness as developed by Aristotle in the ten books of the *Nicomachean Ethics.* The definition given in the first book is that happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with virtue—and if there are many virtues, in accordance with the best and most complete—in a complete life. Virtuous activity is defined as that activity which perfects the specifically human part of the soul, the rational faculty, in the same sense that musical excellence perfects the faculty of music-making in one who has the potentiality to make music. What is crucial in the foregoing for understanding the definition of the *polis* is that the idea of a complete and self-sufficient community, a community that embraces all other communities but is embraced by none, corresponds exactly to the idea of happiness: the human good that embraces and includes within itself as an element of its own definition all other goods, but is itself included in the definition of no other good. Happiness is the term of all human action, and is implicit as the final term of every human action. The *polis* is the term of all human communities, and is the external, organized expression of the unity which governs or ought govern the totality of human actions in all their diversity.

Near the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* immediately after affirming that there must be one goal for the whole of human life even as there must be a mark for the archer, Aristotle says that of the sciences and faculties the one that would guide us toward this goal or mark would be the most authoritative and the master of all the others. Politics is this supreme discipline, and the language Aristotle uses to describe the relation of politics to all other disciplines corresponds closely to the language used at the beginning of the *Politics* to describe the relation of the *polis* to all other forms of community. Politics determines which of the sciences should be studied in the *polis,* by which of the citizens, and to what degree. Politics alone rules strategy, economics, and rhetoric. For happiness is the end of politics, as victory is of strategy, and wealth of economics. Only the man who understands the requirements of victory

can utilize, let us say, a cavalry maneuver, even if he requires a cavalry officer to execute it. And only the one who understands the requirements of happiness can utilize victory, even if he requires a general to secure it. The ultimate end of human life, the good for man, happiness, Aristotle maintains, is one and the same, whether we consider one man or a *polis.* But to attain or preserve it for a *polis* or a nation seems greater or more complete than for one man. The reason why is made clear at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* when the meaning of happiness has been fully elaborated and the transition to the *Politics* is indicated. The conditions of happiness are seldom if ever within the ability of one man to control. Only good men can be happy (although they may not be), but good laws make good men, and good government makes good laws.

Following the definition of the *polis,* the first book of the *Politics* is concerned in the main to establish two things: first, that the unity which constitutes the *polis* is complex rather than simple, that there are several forms of authority within it and not only one; and second, that the *polis* exists by nature and not by law or convention alone, and that the ground of authority in the *polis* is nature and not arbitrary compulsion. Aristotle first attacks "some" (Plato and others) who fail to distinguish between political rule, royal rule, the rule of a household, and the rule of a master, treating them as differing only in the number of those ruling or the number of those ruled. A little later he attacks "others" who maintain that for one man to be master of another is against nature and can be attributed only to unjust force. Those who hold that the distinction between a free man and a slave is altogether artificial maintain as well that all authority is conventional and that there is no nonarbitrary standard by which to distinguish just from unjust compulsion. The Platonic view seems in theory to be the extreme opposite of the conventionalist view, but in practice it appears to have a certain resemblance to it. In the idea of the good, Plato held to an objective standard outside human opinion, and hence outside human convention, which was the ground of all right action, whether by one man or by a *polis.* In the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle criticizes this doctrine in some detail, the most important result of this criticism, for present purposes, being that such an idea cannot serve as a guide to action. The "good-in-itself" will not serve the weaver, the carpenter, or the doctor, who will not discover from it what is good in cloth, in furniture, or in health. Acting man acts with reference to particulars. The doctor treats not man-in-general, but this man, e.g., Socrates. The doctor must know what health in general is like to treat Socrates, and he does know what such health is like, because he knows what healthy activities of the body are like. But it is these, and not an abstract goodness, that are the tokens of the presence of that good

thing, health. The Platonic idea of the good so transcends individual phenomena that it leaves practical life without a guide. Here, we might observe, is also the principle of the criticism of the *Republic* in the second book of the *Politics:* it is an impractical scheme and can no more guide the legislator than the idea of the good can guide the weaver, carpenter, or doctor. The Platonic teaching recognizes an objective standard, but it is impractical; the conventionalists deny that there is an objective standard. Aristotle maintains that we have in nature a standard that is both practical and objective.

Aristotle undertakes to demonstrate both the aforesaid contentions, namely, the differences of the different forms of authority and the naturalness of the *polis,* by tracing the growth of the *polis* from its first beginning and its composition from its elements. Its first beginnings are the coupling together of male and female for the continuation of the species. This clearly is natural and is in accordance with a necessity common to man and all other animals. But the union of male and female for generation is no more intended by nature than the union of ruler and ruled for safety. Foresight of the mind is the basis of ruling the body, as the ability of the body to do what the mind sees is needful is the basis of being ruled. Slave and female are distinct by nature, as the functions of procreation and self-preservation, although intimately connected, are distinct. The right ordering of the family requires recognition of the differences between the two, which the barbarians fail to do by treating women as slaves. The family, arising from natural needs, is a natural community, with a common interest binding its members, male and female, master and slave. Its structuring, in terms of the foregoing distinctions, is not adventitious but is—or should be—rooted in an understanding of nature. The union of several families makes a village, and of several villages a *polis.* When are there enough villages to comprise a *polis?* When the human and nonhuman resources of the several villages, in combination, enable the community to be self-sufficient. What makes a community self-sufficient? When it is able to lead the good life. The distinction between mere life, on the one hand, the consequence of procreation and self-preservation, and the good life, is apparent from the difference between the household and the *polis.*

The union of families into the larger whole is in one sense no less natural than the union of male and female from which the family results. The man who first united villages to form a *polis* was the cause of the greatest goods, says Aristotle, implying that deliberate action, and not the kind of natural necessity that produced the family, is the cause of the political community. But the purpose of the *polis* is no less natural than that of the family, because ultimately they are one and the same. Whether we consider a man, a horse, or a household, the nature of each thing is

what it is when it is fully grown and completed. Nature does nothing in vain, and she has endowed man with the faculty of reason and speech. This faculty is not what appears in other animals when they signify pleasure and pain to each other. Nor is the *polis* like the beehive or any other nonhuman community, which carries out the division of tasks by the mechanism of instinct. Reason and speech —not instinct—indicate the useful and the harmful, the just and the unjust. The common burdens and the common advantages must be divided and shared by rules which must themselves be decided upon by the sharers in the common good. What these rules are, and how they are to be applied, is what we mean by the administration of justice in the broadest sense. And it is participation in this which makes a man a citizen, and the partnership in justice is the political community. The family and the village are too narrow for self-sufficiency, and hence too narrow for justice. Hence the *polis,* as the only community adequate for the fulfillment of man's specifically human potentiality, must be *prior* to the family in one of the senses that the oak tree is prior to the acorn. The *polis* is also prior to the family as, in our former analysis, the chair is prior to the carpentering which produces it. That is, it is prior in the order of final causality. The *polis* is also prior to the single human being, as the whole man is prior to the hand or any other organ of the whole. For except as he lives in a *polis* a man cannot live a fully human existence, he cannot function as a man. For man is the rational and political animal.

To comprehend Aristotle's famous discussion of slavery one must remind oneself of the context established by the coincidence of the two contrary theses, Platonic and conventionalist. The latter regards the distinction between master and slave as wholly conventional and as resting upon force. The former, by affirming that there is essentially one science of ruling, and that the variety of forms of rule are differences of degree rather than kind, also affirms by implication that the difference between master and slave except as an example of the distinction between ruler and ruled, is conventional. Aristotle's crucial thesis, which is itself in agreement with Plato, is that the distinction between ruler and ruled, of which master and slave is an example, is a distinction that we find throughout nature. We find in the cause of the difference between man and the lower animals, and even in inanimate things, as for example in the musical scale, a ruling principle. Above all, we find a principle of rule in the difference between body and soul, and within the soul in the difference between reason and desire. The soul rules the body by a despotic rule, and the reasoning part of the soul rules the passions, by a political or royal rule. By this Aristotle means that the faculties of the body, as such, merely experience pleasure and pain, seeking the one and avoiding the other; but the thinking part of man teaches him that he is sometimes

preserved by what is painful (e.g., surgery) and destroyed by what is pleasant (e.g., narcotics). That in man which responds merely to the demands of the body, like a child whom one cannot by any possibility persuade to drink bitter medicine, must simply be ruled or overruled, by deception or force. The passions, unlike the demands of the body, are not the response to mere pleasure and pain. Anger, for example, may lead us to seek revenge, however dangerous or painful the occasion. Here reason rules differently, persuading us to seek revenge only when revenge is justified. The passion of anger is clearly capable of receiving instruction; i.e., one can learn not to feel satisfaction in wrongly indulged anger and to feel satisfaction in a rightly indulged anger. One cannot learn to feel bodily pleasure in the surgeon's knife, or to feel bodily pain in a successful sexual act, however illicit. In the latter case one can simply deny the purely physical impulses, and this is the prototype of despotic rule. In the former case one can discipline one's affections to move of themselves in the directions judged good by reason. Trained obedience, as distinct from brute direction, is the characteristic of being ruled politically or royally.

Perhaps the simplest explanation of what Aristotle means by natural slavery is that it is an example of the relation of body and soul, in which the body of one man is related to the soul of another. If there is a man with a mentality like that of the child, who cannot perceive that it is sometimes good to take bitter medicine, then he must be ruled like a child, for his own good. But such a man cannot have a good of his own, as a normal child can have. That is, the child must be ruled by his father in order that he may eventually become a good man, independent of his father's commands. But the natural slave, being a grown man who must be ruled as a child, can never be a complete human being. Properly speaking, he is not a grown man, although he may have the body of one. He is a part, not a whole, and he may become part of a whole only as he belongs to another, in a sense comparable to that in which any grown man's body is part of him, namely, as an instrument of his intelligence. It is in this sense that a natural slave is property, i.e., he is an instrument for action by a soul able to live a good life. He is properly part of the household, because even as an instrument of action he is capable only of the uncomplicated actions which are directly concerned with the business of the household, the business of providing material conditions for the preservation of life. Noble actions are not possible for one who cannot do noble things for their own sake, and a natural slave is bereft of the higher functions of the soul.

That there are natural slaves, in the aforesaid sense, is the universal experience of mankind. Today we call them mental incompetents, among other things. Aristotle is emphatic that those who are called slaves, but who are in fact competent, are not slaves by nature, but by law and

convention only, and the slavery of such men does rest, at bottom, upon force. There is a common interest which unites natural slave with natural master, but this is not true when unjust law and force alone are the ground of the relationship. Who is truly a master, and who is truly a slave, depends then upon the intrinsic characteristics of master and slave. The Platonic thesis is wrong in that it makes one man the ruler of another because the former possesses a certain kind of knowledge. Aristotle admits that there may indeed be a science of ruling slaves, but he denies that it is the possession of this science which, in the first instance, entitles a man to be a master. Rather, such a science profits a master in his use of slaves, just as it may profit him to have his slaves instructed in their duties by those who make a study of such things, even as he might employ someone to train his dogs and horses.

The discussion of the relation of master and slave forms the first part of Aristotle's treatment of the household, and the *polis,* as a compound of communities, is essentially a compound of families or households. To understand the genesis of politics means to understand the functions generated by families but incapable of being carried to perfection within the framework of the family. Families consist of freemen and slaves. The relationships of the free members are those of husband and wife, father and children. The rule of the husband is a kind of political rule, in that both husband and wife are rational beings, reason being naturally stronger in the man. The husband is like an official permanently in office, and the wife is like a nonofficial citizen (although Aristotle admits that sometimes, contrary to nature, the wife is more rational than the husband). The rule of the father over his children is more royal than political, in that the distance between them is much greater than between husband and wife, but the kind of direction he gives them is entirely different from that which befits slaves who remain permanently subordinate, while the children eventually become full citizens.

The exact purpose of Aristotle's elaborate discussion of the household in Book I of the *Politics* is the subject of much difference of opinion, and each student can form his own judgment only on the basis of the most detailed consideration. Here we can but set down some guidelines. Clearly, the highest function of the family, like that of the *polis,* is the formation of character. The end of the *Nicomachean Ethics* indicates that the transition from ethics to politics is required by the limitations of the family for the purpose of training. Whether education is public or private, the art of legislating is required for it. That is, not the father as father, but the father who is legislator, can wisely prescribe even to his own son. But in fact it is difficult to have good families in a corrupt *polis,* so for still other reasons legislation is needed. In considering the legislation for the best regime, in Books VII and VIII of the *Politics,* the chief subject is the

educational curriculum. But the discussion in Book I is mainly concerned with what we would call economics, or with the provision of the materials by which the bodies of men, rather than their souls, are nourished. Still, the fact that the bodies in question are those of men, and not animals other than man, is the crucial fact when we consider how to provide for their bodies. This may be indicated by considering two texts dealing with the family. In Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*[6] Aristotle observes that friendship between man and wife seems to exist by nature, since man is more a conjugal than a political animal, and the household prior to and more necessary than the *polis,* as the production of offspring is common to man and the other animals. Yet in the better known passage in the *Politics,* Book I,[7] he says that the *polis* is by nature prior to the household and to each of us. The formal solution of this apparent contradiction is, as we have indicated, in the distinction between what is prior in the order of efficient causality (the household) and what is prior in the order of final causality (the *polis*). However, the question remains as to what are the activities generated by the material requirements of the family, the efficient causes of which are the natural necessities of mere life, necessities consistent with (but not sufficient for) the end of the *polis.*

The analysis consists of two main parts. The basic element of the first part is a comparison of the human family with families of animals other than man. Aristotle had remarked near the beginning of Book I[8] that man in virtue of his rationality was more political than the bee or any other gregarious animal. But the implicit comparison with the beehive was defective in this, that the beehive does not require institution, as does the *polis,* and therefore is in one sense more obviously natural. The comparison of the household with the families of other animals is in one sense more perfect than the comparison of the *polis* with the beehive, since the families of men and of animals other than man are formed in the same way. Deep consideration of similarities and differences of the families of gregarious animals seems to reveal the emergence of the conventional from the natural in the human family by a kind of necessity, and to reveal how nature remains the norm for convention, even as convention replaces nature as the cause of the material conditions of life.

The arts or sciences dealing with the household fall into two classes. First, there are those concerned with household management, which refers to the right use of the goods of the household. Of the goods of the household, there are two kinds: tools or instruments, and materials. A shuttle is an inanimate tool, as a slave is an animate one. Fleece is a material for the weaver, as bronze is for the statuary. Second, there is the

[6] Ibid., 1162[a] 16-19.
[7] Aristotle *Politics* 1253[a] 19.
[8] Ibid., 1253[a] 7-9.

art or science of acquisition. Strictly speaking, it is not an art *of* the household, since it is not carried on by the household or in the household, but it provides materials and tools by which the work of the household can be carried on. Of all the goods that must be provided, food of course is the most important. And nature provides not only men, but all animals with food. Some animals are flesh-eating, others grain-eating, and nature points out the proper food to each and provides for each the food for which it has adapted them. The natural modes of acquisition for man—corresponding with the grazing or predatory activities of other animals—are those of pastoral nomads, hunters, farmers. The hunters Aristotle divides into brigands or pirates, fishermen, and the hunters of fowl and game. In a summary statement Aristotle lists nomads, farmers, brigands, fishermen, hunters. Brigands are now separated from other hunters; and still later Aristotle includes the art of war as part of the art of hunting—the hunting of human beings for the purpose of reducing to servitude those who are by nature slaves and who resist enslavement. Brigandage as a natural mode of acquisition, and war for the sake of enslavement as part of the art of acquisition, are the striking features of this analysis. The explanation, whatever it may ultimately be, certainly derives from the idea that nature provides man with the necessaries of life even as she provides the other animals. If plants exist for the support of animal life, then the lower animals exist for the higher, and all animals, or such as are serviceable to him, must then exist for man. Since a slave is something less than a full human being, he, too, is a legitimate object of acquisition.

The second part of acquisition, which is in an especial sense wealth-getting, is acquisition by barter and trade. One part of this is natural, namely, acquisition by simple barter, e.g., the exchange of shoes for grain. The second part is acquisition of money, and this branch, although it is originally merely an extension of barter, becomes something very different, and in this difference is not merely not natural, but is contrary to nature.

Money is invented as a convenience, to facilitate such natural exchanges as shoes for grain, because natural goods are difficult to carry about. Money is a common measure for other goods, with only limited intrinsic value itself. Yet as trade continues, the acquisition of money becomes an end in itself, and what is a measure for wealth is identified with wealth. Finally, money is earned, not only from the exchange of goods other than money, but from the exchanging of money, i.e., from usury. This is wholly unnatural and hence bad.

Why does the human faculty of reason lead to such degeneration, proceeding as it does from the extension of natural barter through the use of money to the final corruption of usury? Natural wealth is limited by the needs of the household, for example, the amount of fleece by the

amount of cloth needed for clothing, the amount of food by the hunger of a limited number of stomachs. But every art is unlimited with respect to the good at which it aims: medicine does not aim at a certain amount of health, it aims at as much health as possible. Once wealth becomes an end, as it is the end of what we today call economics, it seeks not the amount of wealth needed by the family, but simply wealth. Yet the connection of economics with the family remains in this fact: the family originates in the need to perpetuate life, and economics seeks to accumulate goods that are serviceable for life. That is, it seeks goods that either support mere life or that gratify the appetites necessary for the preservation of life. The drive for accumulation is rooted in the enjoyable excess of those pleasures which are originally the natural concomitants of the preservation of life. Such excess is the natural enemy, we might say, of the perception of the difference between mere life and the good life, and for this reason Aristotle condemns it categorically.

Still, Aristotle admits that the art of acquisition is part of the art of the statesman, and he nowhere excludes the possibility that even usury may be sometimes useful. The *polis* needs the specialized vocations of the arts of acquisition and of medicine, since the families need the benefits of their skills, and the family as family cannot provide them.

If we compare the two branches of acquisition, we must notice that at the center of one is a species of war and that the other is trade, culminating in usury. Neither war nor trade in their developed forms can be carried on by the family. Thus we see that political activity is generated by the requirements of the human family, even though the human family originates in the same necessities as do the families of beasts. To some extent war and trade are alternative modes of acquisition, and Aristotle seems to praise war, or at least just war, while condemning trade, or at least its extreme form. The root of injustice seems to be the abolition of the limits upon the desires of the body of which man, alone among the animals, is capable. Perhaps the extreme of trade, culminating in usury, is more akin to the abolition of those limits than is war. Whether or not this explains Aristotle's judgment, it is clear that nature has established limits for human life, no less than she has done for the other animals, however much she has left it in the hands of men to enforce those limits.

The second book of the *Politics* consists of these main parts: first, critiques of theories or discourses concerning the best regime by men who did not themselves take part in politics (Plato, Phaleas, and Hippodamus); second, critiques of three well-governed actual regimes (Sparta, Crete, and Carthage); and third, a brief discussion of nine famous lawgivers, men who combined theory with practice by either founding regimes or legislating

for existing ones. We might then characterize the order of Book II as theoretical, practical, and practical-theoretical.

Book I established the formal definition of the *polis* as the community of communities and affirmed it to be a complex, natural whole. In tracing its genesis from the family, Aristotle traced the genesis within the elements of which the *polis* is compounded to the distinction between mere life and the good life. The full elaboration of this distinction would provide a description of the best of all possible ways of life; it would describe the best *politeia* or regime. This Aristotle actually does in Books VII and VIII, although he has not completed the task when Book VIII breaks off. It is important to realize, however, that for Aristotle the nature of the *polis,* as of everything that exists by nature, is such that its perfection, which is its nature in the most emphatic sense, is to be sought in the first instance in the manner of its generation. And this in turn is due to the way in which Aristotle conceived the relation of theory and practice, speech and deed, essence and existence.

Every actual *polis* presents itself in the form of some regime: it is either a democracy, an aristocracy, an oligarchy, and so on. Similarly, every man whom we see, apart from having a name like Smith or Jones, is either brave or cowardly, just or unjust, wise or foolish. We never see a *polis* or a man, we only see individual *poleis* or men, and to be man or *polis* is never identical with being the particular being whom we experience with our senses. Further, Smith may be brave, and Athens may be free, but the quality of being a brave man or a free *polis* is never identical with being Smith or Athens. When we reason out what it is that makes a man brave or a *polis* free, we discover that the quality itself implies more than is or can be perceived in any actual *or possible* Smith or Athens. For Plato, the qualities revealed in speech, the qualities which we contemplate with our minds' eyes, hence the qualities which are the objects of theory, always transcend—thus in some sense differ from or contradict—the things of which we have sensible experience. Reality, for Plato, is thus ineluctably paradoxical. Aristotle denies this. Man (like dogs and horses) is generated by man and the sun. The things discovered in speech are reflections of things themselves or, rather, they are more or less adequate reflections depending upon whether the speech about the things is adequately disciplined by a true method or science of the things. The idea of man is in each man and is ultimately identical with the activity in virtue of which human beings generate human beings and not dogs or horses. There is thus no paradox for Aristotle in the unity of man and the plurality of men. The idea of the *polis* is similarly present in the generating factors of the *polis* (similarly, not identically, because the *polis* requires the assistance of art for its generation in a way that generation which is altogether

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natural does not). Plato's *Politeia* or *Republic* reveals what Plato regards as the nature of justice, but it transcends every actual or possible *politeia* in the way that speech about every idea reveals tendencies in sensible things that sensible things themselves never fully embody.

In approaching Aristotle's critique of the Republic, the dominating topic of Book II, we should consider that Aristotle's demonstration of the impossibility of that regime as a model for political practice (like his demonstration of the impossibility of the idea of the good serving as such a model or guide in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*) is in agreement, rather than disagreement, with Plato. The disagreement lies deeper and concerns whether a model which transcends practice and can never be imitated in practice reveals the nature of practice more truly than a model which lies within the range of what is possible in practice. It is characteristic of the difference between Plato and Aristotle that Plato's quest for the best regime requires a construction in speech (or theory) to which nothing in practice does or can correspond, while Aristotle's quest first takes the form of an inquiry into regimes both of speech and deed, either of which might contain elements of the best regime. The first regime in the *Republic,* the so-called city of pigs, the regime constructed out of the necessities of the bodies of men, revealed nothing of the ultimate demands of justice. For Plato, the generating of living bodies by living bodies does not of itself set in motion the tendencies which culminate in the truly just regime, the regime which can exist only in speech. In Book I of the *Politics* Aristotle contradicts this thesis: the families which result from the generation of the bodies of men evidently require as their complement the *polis.* The justice which makes every *polis* a *polis,* i.e., the form that justice takes in virtue of which this *polis* is a democracy and not an oligarchy, is a variety of the forms of justice. The unity underlying the plurality of the forms of the *polis* is like the unity underlying the variety of individuals of every species. It results from the nature common to all men, who are all political animals. This nature is *in* all men, not beyond them, and the truth about the *polis* like that about all nature is nonparadoxical because it is constituted, not by the duality of form and matter (to which correspond speech and deed, theory and practice), but by their unity.

The first and dominating topic of Book II, as we have noted, is the consideration of Plato's *Republic.* One must attend with utmost care to the manner of its introduction. The *polis* is a community, a having things in common. It is the community of communities, hence it embraces something common to everyone. Aristotle asks, Is its perfection achieved by making common everything that can possibly be common? Or by making some things common and others not? Or by making nothing

common? The last appears to be excluded by definition. If nothing were common it would not be a community. In the *Republic* of Plato, observes Aristotle, Socrates says that children and wives and property are to be shared or made common to all the citizens. Which arrangement is preferable, Aristotle asks, that which now obtains or that in the law set forth in the *Republic?*

To facilitate a concise view of a lengthy argument, it may be well to give Aristotle's answer to the foregoing question at the outset. The present system, of private families and private property, if adorned by good morals and by the right laws, would be much superior. Aristotle does not say flatly that the present system is superior because he does not seem to regard the present system (namely, that of Athens, which is not one of those thought by Aristotle to be well governed) as good. But the present system can be made good, whereas that of the *Republic* cannot. Why? The fundamental objection to the communism proposed by Socrates is that it aims to produce the greatest amount of unity in the *polis* but mistakes the nature of political unity. To push unity beyond a certain point, says Aristotle, changes the *polis* into a family, and a family (so far as possible) into one man. But in doing this, he says, you do not unify the *polis* but rather destroy it.

Aristotle now demonstrates how the family, whose growth and proliferation require the institution of the *polis,* is structurally part of the perfected *polis,* because the distinctions which give structure to the family—between husband and wife, father and children—are the foundation of morality within the *polis.* To take the broadest ground, the morality which consists in subordination of private interests to public welfare is impossible if the distinction between private and public is abolished. The *polis,* Aristotle holds, is a heterogeneous, not a homogeneous, unity. It is no more unified by abolishing the distinction between private families than by abolishing the distinction between occupations. That is, you do not make the *polis* more a unity by making every man a shoemaker and every man a carpenter; on the contrary, the *polis* requires division of labor, and by reciprocal equality, which means a fair exchange between artisans like the shoemaker and the carpenter, enables all to enjoy better shoes and better houses. In the isolated family the skills of shoemaker and carpenter may be necessary within the same household, but the institution of the *polis,* in which many specialized skills are available to all, is for this very reason self-sufficient in a way the family by itself is not. If two men call the same woman wife, the result is apt to be, not greater friendship, but conflict. In fact, however, Socrates intended all men to call all women their wives, and all the children collectively their children. Each woman was only a fractional wife of each man, and each

child only a fractional child of each father. This, says Aristotle, will not strengthen the social bonds but will dilute them. Better for a man to regard a boy as his own nephew than as his and every other man's son. With the weakening of the strong bonds of private affection and private morality will come a weakening of the moral prohibitions against assaults and injuries against fathers and kinsmen, not to mention the dissolution of restraints against incest and homosexuality. To abolish the private family leads to the abolition of most of the prohibited degrees of sexual intercourse, and in consequence to the introduction of many forms of familiarity which lead to immoral intercourse. The claims of morality cannot thereby be enhanced but are rather dissipated. Aristotle's argument seems to be that the restraints which one learns in the family, e.g., the respect for authority in the person of the father, and the enhancement of an offense of violence if it is against a father, and similarly the horror of incest between parents and children, or between brother and sister, or of homosexuality between brothers, lays a foundation of restraints upon behavior which is then extended to members of different families, and finally to civic morality. Civic morality consists in perfecting the morality whose foundation is the family, at first by giving it an authority greater than the family can achieve, and finally by giving it a purpose which transcends the family.

In addition, Aristotle emphasizes the impossibilities of Socrates' proposal: the resemblances between natural parents and their children will betray themselves, and attachments will accordingly be formed. Public property will not be well cared for, some will be slackers in their work, and quarrels will arise in the distribution of the goods. The reclassing of children, which Socrates says will go on between the guardians and the working class, will betray the origins of some, and even the diluted bonds will be attenuated. Moreover, Socrates leaves a mass of unsolved difficulties: for example, is communism limited to the guardian class, or does it include the farmers and artisans? If there is to be one communist system for them all, so that all are "children" of the same "parents," how can the two classes be separated into menials and guardians? And if communism is limited to the upper class, what will be the political functions and education of the lower class? If they do have private property, it will be very hard to keep them in a subordinate position.

Private property, Aristotle holds, is rooted in human nature. Selfishness is justly condemned; but this does not mean it is wrong to love oneself, only that it is wrong to love oneself in excess. Similarly, love of money is not wrong, but loving it in excess is. The indefeasible roots of private property are the indefeasibly private pleasures of the body. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle observes that the pleasures of good food, wine, and sexual intercourse which all men enjoy, pleasures which are

natural and necessary, are not bad.[9] Only their excesses are bad. Socratic communism in the *Republic* would, by attempting to abolish the occasions of evil, abolish also many of the occasions of virtue. Even if it prevented some evil, it would also prevent much good. The advantages of communism can be gained by making the use of property common, as in Sparta men freely use each other's slaves and horses and dogs and help themselves to the fruits of each other's fields as they travel. But a man cannot practice liberality if he has nothing of his own to give, or show temperance in relation to women if there is not such a thing as another man's wife. The real cause of evil, says Aristotle, is not the absence of communism, but wickedness. What must be made common is not wives and children and property, but a system of education. The *polis* is no more made one by communism than a harmony is made one by converting it into a unison, or a rhythm made one by converting it to a single beat. It is strange, says Aristotle, that one who, like Socrates in the *Republic,* expects to accomplish excellence by education, should at the same time rely on such institutions, instead of relying on customs, philosophy, and laws.

The *Laws,* says Aristotle, was written later, in an attempt to provide a regime nearer to actual *poleis,* although in fact it leads back little by little to the *Republic.* And so most of the same objections made to the *Republic* apply to it. As a proposal for the regime which is next to the first (or best) it is unacceptable, although as a version of polity, or the mean between democracy and oligarchy adaptable to most *poleis,* it might have something to recommend it.

All other regimes are nearer to actual practice than those of Plato. Phaleas of Chalcedon has made a proposal that resembles Plato's in that it attempts to eliminate the causes of division and strife within the *polis* by the regulation of property. Indeed, Aristotle credits Phaleas with being the first to introduce this notion. Phaleas would make the property of the citizens equal at the foundation of a regime, and in those already established would seek to level inequalities by requiring the rich to give but not receive dowries and the poor to receive but not give them. Aristotle comments, first, that such legislation (as also in the case of Plato's *Laws*) will be ineffectual if the total number of children is not limited in proportion to the total amount of property. Second, not merely equality and inequality must be considered with respect to men's estates, but their size, which must be neither too large nor too small, tending neither to luxury nor penury. Finally, what is needful is not so much to level men's properties but their desires, and this requires education.

Phaleas, it is true, is consistent in providing the same education for

[9] Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1154^a 15ff.

all. But he does not tell us what that education is to be. But, says Aristotle, dissension is caused not only by inequality of property, but by inequality of honor, the lower classes being concerned primarily with the former, the upper classes with the latter.

According to what Aristotle says here, inequality of property is, relatively speaking, a minor factor in the creation of civil disturbances. This, he maintains, is because it is not so much the avoidance of pain, or the deprivations of the body, which cause trouble as it is the appetites or desires not connected with deprivations. It is not so much to avoid hunger and cold that men steal as to enjoy luxury. That a man's neighbor has a greater estate will not anger him nearly so much as if one he deems his inferior is held in the same honor. There are then three classes of desires which need to be dealt with: those arising from the needs of the body; those arising from the desires of the body in excess of what is necessary; and the desire for pleasures which are not due to pains i.e., as the pleasure of eating depends upon the pain of hunger). For the first kind of desire, a moderate amount of property accompanied by work is needful; for the second, the virtue of temperance or moderation; for the third, the remedy is philosophy, which alone frees us from dependence upon other men.

Phaleas' scheme is directed only to minor evils and fails to take into account that the greatest crimes are not those connected in any way with property. Men do not become tyrants, observes Aristotle, to avoid hunger and cold, nor does one honor a man for killing a thief as one does for killing a tyrant. Leveling estates is not, then, the place to start in the attack upon political evil. The starting point, says Aristotle, is to train those who are by nature superior not to desire to have more than is right, and to prevent the inferior (while not treating them unjustly) from being able to.

Hippodamus was the first man not engaged in politics to speak of the best regime, even as Plato was first to introduce community of wives and children, and Phaleas first to attack the problem of dissension by the regulation of property. Hippodamus was an eccentric, and Aristotle gives a character sketch of him—the original political scientist—that is without parallel in either the *Ethics* or *Politics.* He had long hair (the Spartan style, considered effeminate in Athens), wore the same cheap clothes summer and winter, but with expensive ornaments, and wished to be learned in the whole of natural science. He was also the man, Aristotle tells us, who invented the division of cities and applied it to Piraeus (the port of Athens). He was, we might add, the father of town-planning as well as of political science (in one sense of that term). Perhaps the most revealing brief comment on Hippodamus is one that occurs in Book VII, in the course of Aristotle's thematic discussion of his own best regime. The question concerns the arrangement of streets. The modern fashion intro-

duced by Hippodamus, which is more pleasant and convenient, is for private houses to be laid out along straight lines. But, says Aristotle, the opposite arrangement of olden times was much safer, for it was harder for foreign troops to find their way into the city or make their way through it. Aristotle's own solution, characteristically, is to combine the two kinds of plans, designing certain parts of the *polis* for comfort and beauty and others for security. Hippodamus was, then, a theorist in the modern sense, i.e., one who approached politics as an abstract problem in design, without regard for the problems that statesmen as practical men faced. He was also like certain twentieth-century political scientists in his attempt to assimilate the science of politics to a mathematically oriented natural science. Hippodamus' scheme has a certain resemblance to Plato's in that it appears to be an attempt to impose mathematical harmony upon the *polis.* His best regime had a population of ten thousand and was divided into artisans, farmers, and warriors. The land he also divided into three parts: one sacred, one public, one private. The law, too, he found fell into three categories: outrage, damage, and homicide. He established one supreme court of appeal for all cases, to consist of selected elders. He thought that jurors should not give simple verdicts of guilty or not guilty, according to the indictment as drawn (the current practice), but should give qualified verdicts finding guilt on some counts but not others—if this was the individual juror's belief—and assessing damages according to the juror's judgment in damage suits. For Hippodamus thought that the practice of finding a man guilty or not guilty, when the juror believed him to be guilty of some things but not of others in the indictment, forced the juror to commit perjury. Finally, Hippodamus proposed a law which would honor anyone who discovered anything new for the advantage of the *polis,* as well as one that would provide public support for war orphans. Aristotle dryly observes that Hippodamus apparently thought this last was a new suggestion, but in fact such a law already exists in Athens and other *poleis.*[10]

The last observation sets the tone of the critique of Hippodamus: a man who wants to institute systematic search for political novelty ought to be better acquainted with what already exists. The tripartite division of the *polis* has an air of simplicity which is specious: all three classes are to share in the government, but the farmers have no arms, and the artisans neither arms nor land. The warriors will not tolerate the political equality of those who are thus much weaker than themselves, and the oppression of the warriors will make the other classes enemies of the regime. More trenchant still is Aristotle's criticism of the so-called farming class: on the

[10] We cannot help being reminded of present-day investigators who pursue elaborate studies with refined mathematical techniques, which end only in the "scientific" demonstration of what everyone always knew.

face of it, no class would seem more necessary, and yet in fact they farm only for themselves and are politically superfluous. The warriors are to be supported from the public land, which they must either farm themselves (hindering their ability to be soldiers), or there will be yet a fourth class to farm it for them, which in turn will have no political rights. The artisans are self-supporting anyway. Aristotle reveals confusion after confusion beneath the surface of these proposals.

Again, the proposal to reward those who discover advantageous novelties is attractive but unsafe. It may cause malicious prosecutions (either against the innovators or by the innovators) and even revolution. This leads to another, broader question, and it is the fundamental question raised by Hippodamus: Is politics an art or science like the other arts or sciences, in which each new discovery is rightly incorporated into the practice of the art or science? Aristotle's reply is that politics is not like medicine or gymnastics, in which every alteration from traditional practice, in the light of better knowledge, is rightly acceptable. Not that tradition as such is a political norm: on the contrary, the most ancient customs are utterly foolish; and in general what men really seek is not what their fathers had but what is good. The distinction between the good and the ancestral is as fundamental to the art or science of politics as to any other. The possibility of improvement in the political order is in fact twofold: first, because of the progress of general intelligence (including progress in the arts and sciences) from primitive man; and second, because of the necessity of every law to be framed in general terms, while the actions governed by law are always particulars. Experience must always reveal ways in which the laws might be better framed, and therefore how they might be improved. On the other hand, however, much caution must be exercised in making these improvements, says Aristotle. Small improvements would not outweigh the harm done by making changes in the laws, changes which breed distrust in the government. The example of the other arts is false. Politics is not an art like medicine and gymnastics, for the law has no power to persuade other than that derived from custom or habit, and these are formed only over a long period of time. Changing laws weakens their power, it loosens the bonds of the community, and this requires the greatest circumspection. But if changes in the laws are to be made, says Aristotle (and of course they sometimes must and ought to be made, or why write the *Politics?*), does this mean that all laws are open to change in every form of government? To use a modern instance, would we here in the United States today accept proposals for change in the Bill of Rights in the same spirit as changes in the exemptions in the income tax? And again, Aristotle asks, shall anyone propose changes, or only certain people? For example, does it make no difference whether the changes are proposed by a constitutional convention under the presiding genius of a

George Washington, or by anyone anywhere? These things make a difference in politics that they do not make in the practice of the other arts.

After the discussion of the three regimes of speech or theory, we come to the three actual regimes, which exist in deed. Concerning any regime, Aristotle says, there are two questions. First, how does it compare with the best regime? Second, is there anything in its construction contrary to its hypothesis? The meaning of the second question becomes clearer from an explanation, at the beginning of the fourth book, of the different kinds and degrees of political excellence with which the political philosopher must be concerned. The best regime is such as one ought to choose if there were no external impediments, either human or non-human, to virtue, or virtuous activity, as the end of life in the *polis*. The hypothesis of the best regime is just this: that virtue is its end and that there are no external impediments to its attainment. In practice, however, there almost always will be impediments, both to the choice of the best end and of the best means. The hypothesis of a regime other than the best is the assumption (or set of assumptions) by which the controlling aim or purpose of the regime is qualified in the light of its impediments, as compared with the best regime.

The analysis of Sparta reveals above all one thing: the inner connection between the quality of the construction of a regime and the quality of its hypothesis. Sparta is defective not merely because conditions are less than perfect, but because the legislator mistook a part of virtue for the whole of virtue, and this intellectual error is the leading cause of the defects Aristotle discovers.

Aristotle's critique of the legislator's purpose comes almost at the end of the discussion of Sparta; but as so often happens, the end is in fact the beginning. The entire ordering of the laws is directed to a part of virtue, the part which contributes to success in war. The Spartans' warrior discipline won them safety in war and an empire. But they had no training in the pursuits of peace and began to go to pieces as soon as they had won their hegemony. They err also in another respect, according to Aristotle, and this error is really at the bottom of the other. They rightly think that the good things won by fighting are the achievements of virtue rather than of vice. But they wrongly suppose that the external rewards of virtue are worth more than virtue. The full meaning of this observation is given in Book VII in the famous discussion of the relative merits of the active and the contemplative life, as the ultimate goal either for a single man or for a *polis*.[11] Sparta is there, too, given as an example of a *polis* devoted wholly to war, and war is there seen as the goal of those who do not grasp the ultimate supremacy of thinking over acting, as the basis not only of thought, but of action.

[11] Aristotle *Politics* 1324^a 5-1325^a 13.

The criticism of Sparta has three main divisions: the last part centers upon the principle or hypothesis of the regime; the first concerns the defects of Spartan economy (slaves, women, property); the second concerns political defects in the narrower sense (the ephors, elders, and kings). We will limit outselves to the first and last and their connection. Aristotle begins his criticism of Sparta by observing that a well-governed *polis* needs leisure, and this can only be provided by slaves. He says little more on the subject here, other than that the helots are like an enemy in the Spartans' midst, waiting only for disaster to strike their masters to rise in revolt. Aristotle does not say here what the remedy for such a situation must be, but the answer has already been made clear: the art of ruling slaves is a part of household management, and the Spartans have not cultivated this art. The reason, too, is clear: household management is an art of peaceful living, and friendship between master and slave, to the extent it is possible, depends upon a common purpose uniting them in such a way that both contribute to it according to their natures. War, or success in war, as an end in itself, means ruling those who are not meant to be ruled and for a purpose for which men are not meant to be ruled. The Spartans' defective relation to foreign *poleis,* in virtue of their policy of conquest, is reflected in their defective internal relation with their slaves and wives. In cruder terms, in their anxiety to rule those abroad whom they ought not to rule, they neglect those at home whom they ought to rule. The same reasoning accounts for the licentiousness of Spartan women, who by reason of the neglect of the men, preoccupied with military pursuits, and because of the addiction of soldiers to the pleasures of love, are self-indulgent and unmanageable. The women tend to get control of the management of affairs as well. What difference does it make, asks Aristotle, whether the women rule, or the rulers are ruled by women? The result is the same. The irony of all this is that the *polis* that identifies the whole of virtue with the supposedly most manly of virtues—courage or fighting—is penalized by being dominated by females. The irony comes full circle when Aristotle points out that, in neglecting to rule their women properly (along with their slaves), both because of their absences on military expeditions and because they had neglected the domestic arts while at home, the Spartans greatly weakened themselves militarily. For during the Theban invasion, the women of Sparta caused more confusion than the enemy. The subordination of the pursuits of war to those of peace is then a necessary condition of a truly successful military policy.

The defects of the system of property are consequences of the condition of women. It is dishonorable in Sparta to sell a family estate but not to give it or bequeath it. The result is that nearly two-fifths of the

land is owned by women. Without regulation of inheritances and with the practice of large dowries, the ban upon alienation of estates has proved inconsequential. As a result of the concentration of ownership, there has been a depopulation of the armed class (who need property to furnish the wealth needed for arms), as well as a social division into extremes of wealthy and of poor. Again, we see the attrition of the regime's military strength as an ultimate consequence of its military nature.

The discussion of Crete, which follows that of Sparta, also has three main parts: first, an account of the relationship of Crete and Sparta; second, an account of analogies in the two systems; and third, an evaluation of similarities and differences. Sparta is held to be an improved imitation (on the whole) of Crete, which is the older regime. This raises some subtle and interesting questions as to the possibilities of political progress, a subject first raised in relation to Hippodamus' proposal to reward political novelties. It also involves the question of the relation of Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver, to Minos, the Cretan lawgiver, on the one hand, and to Thales, whose pupil Aristotle says Lycurgus is reputed to have been. Minos, son of Zeus and Europa, represents the oldest tradition of Greek law as it ascends to the gods; Thales is the traditional founder of philosophy. The Cretan institution which Aristotle praises most highly is that of the common meals, which are paid for from the public lands and are not a private charge as at Sparta. The legislator, he says, has devised many wise means for securing moderation at table. Also, he has segregated the women from the men in order that they might not bear many children and for the same purpose has instituted homosexual relations among the men. Whether this is good or bad, says Aristotle, there will be another opportunity to inquire. There is, however, no further discussion of this question in any surviving text, and we may observe that this perverse institution does offer one solution to a recurring problem in the *Politics:* how to keep the ratio of population to property constant. Another solution, of course, was emigration. Whether Crete is one of the three best-governed actual regimes because of, or in spite of, this one feature remains speculative. The principal explicit criticism of Crete is that it does not have any constitutional means of reconciling the people to the regime (as at Sparta where the people choose the ephors), so that discontented members of the upper classes combine with the people periodically to make what are in effect revolutions.

The discussion of the Carthaginian regime follows the same pattern as that of Crete. First, some general remarks comparing it to the others; second, the principal points of resemblance to Sparta; third, criticism of the principal features of the regime. The most conspicuous feature of the general remarks is the praise of Carthage. Carthage comes

closest to Sparta, which has already been praised as better than Crete. The three regimes, says Aristotle, come closer to each other than any of them do to any other regime, and all are greatly superior to any others. The proof of the excellence of Carthage is the fact that the *dēmos* or common people have remained faithful to it, and that neither civil strife nor tyranny worth mentioning has arisen there. Such remarks go quite beyond what Aristotle has said in praise of Sparta and justify classifying Carthage as the best of all actual regimes. Two further points ought to be made here, although they invite the interpretation of Aristotle's silence rather than his words. Carthage is a non-Greek or, in the technical sense, barbarian *polis;* and we are not given any information by Aristotle concerning the legislator or legislators of Carthage, or their relation, if any, to the famous legislators or teachers of legislators concerning whom he says a great deal elsewhere in the *Politics.*

The three points of resemblance to Sparta are: the common messes of the companions (equivalent to the *phiditia*); the office of the one hundred and four (equivalent to the ephorate); and the kings and council of elders (which correspond to the kings and elders at Sparta). In this context Aristotle mentions that the one hundred and four are chosen for merit, not at random, as in Sparta; and the kings are chosen, not from the same families, but from outstanding ones.

As to political criticism, this falls into three categories: features common to Carthage and the other regimes, which Aristotle has sufficiently spoken of in the case of the other two; and those which depart from aristocracy either toward democracy or toward oligarchy. The democratic deviation is the practice of referring to the popular assembly, not only for approval, but for discussion and for ultimate decision, any question upon which kings and elders cannot agree. The oligarchic deviation is in the manner of choosing the magistrates, which is based upon a kind of electoral college system, comprised of "boards of five" which are co-opted and membership in which is clearly restricted to the wealthy classes (although Aristotle does not explicitly say so). But the chief deviation from aristocracy is in an opinion (rather than an institution), and it is one that is shared by the many (as well as the few). For whatever the ruling class holds in honor, Aristotle says in a memorable phrase, the rest of the citizens are certain to follow. This opinion is that rulers should be chosen not only for their virtues but for their wealth. The Carthaginians think that a poor man lacks the leisure for governing well (in which they are of course right), but the legislator errs in not providing from the outset that the best men have sufficient leisure, whether in or out of office.

This leads us to certain observations concerning Aristotle's procedure with these three regimes: the very first question he took up vis-à-vis

Sparta concerned the provision of leisure, which he said is not easy to provide. He there speaks of the difficulties that Spartans and Thessalians had with their servile classes (and no solution for the problem of leisure is hinted at which does not require a servile class). The Cretans, we are told, have escaped this problem, mainly because of the fortune of geography. The requirement of leisure is clearly correlated with the "hypothesis" or principle of the regime, and Sparta we saw was severely criticized for mistaking the nature of virtue. In the treatment of Crete, much is made of the advantages they enjoy from geography. They are evidently less warlike than the Spartans, but in this they are weak rather than wiser. Aristotle says remarkably little about the principle or hypothesis of the Cretan regime. With Carthage, he returns somewhat obliquely to the question of the principle of the regime. Carthage is the only regime of the three that he plainly calls aristocratic, although he does so only in pointing out how it deviates from aristocracy. But as Sparta confuses a part of virtue—courage or military valor—with the whole of virtue, so Carthage confuses a condition of virtue—leisure and the wealth required for it—with virtue. In doing so, the legislator has made the whole *polis* avaricious. It is significant how the criticism of Sparta and Carthage, which Aristotle has already said are closest to each other, here coincides: the consequence of Sparta's devotion to war was also to cause a deviation mainly to oligarchy.

We now come to the last of the three main subdivisions of Book II. This section—dealing with lawgivers—is frequently regarded as consisting of "jottings" or "rough notes" either by Aristotle or a later hand. This view fails to consider, however, the way in which this section seems to fulfill a plan in Book II, moving as it does from the "theoretical" to the "practical" to the "practical-theoretical," i.e., from those who took no part in politics but wrote on the best regime, to good regimes of practice, to the views of those who both held opinions concerning the best regime and took part in politics. Moreover, while there are three regimes of "theory" and three of "practice," there are nine legislators mentioned by Aristotle. The central one of these is Onomacritus (whose name means "name-judge"), who was a Locrian who traveled in Crete, where he practiced soothsaying. According to a tradition (in which Aristotle himself places little credence), he was the first man who became skillful in legislation (as Plato was first to introduce community of wives and children, Phaleas first to equalize property, and Hippodamus first, not a politician, to speak of the best regime). Apparently, however, he did not have any pupils, but had as a companion Thales, who in turn had Lycurgus and Zaleucus for pupils. The whole subject of the relation of tradition to the arts (as of Minos to Thales) and the nature of the relation of progress in the one to progress in the other, is certainly involved here, as it is in the great thematic passage on Hippodamus. But only a compre-

hensive analysis of the admittedly episodic passages in this section, in their relation to similar passages elsewhere in the *Politics,* could establish their meaning.

Book III begins as follows: "To the one inquiring concerning the regime, what each is and of what sort, almost the first inquiry to make is about the *polis,* whatever is the *polis.*"

Aristotle says he must discover "what and what sort" each regime is. There is, then, a variety of regimes. We must try to understand what that variety is by again trying to understand what the *polis* is. But have we not already had the *polis* defined for us? Aristotle carefully says that "almost" the first question is, Whatever is the *polis?* The first question was answered by the definition with which the *Politics* began, a definition elaborated and defended in the remainder of Book I. The opening definition establishes the relation of the *polis* to other species of human community on the one hand, and to the genus "communities of gregarious animals" on the other. In Book I Aristotle established the definition of the *polis* as the community of communities, originating in the need to preserve life, but continuing for the sake of the self-sufficient or good life. The analysis of the household, and the sciences arising from its needs, establishes the necessity of a separate science of the *polis,* as it established the specific differences of *polis* and household. Book II demonstrated the need for a new inquiry into the best regime. Book III supplies us with the science of the *polis* and the leading feature of that science: an adequate inquiry into the principles of regimes, and in particular of the best regime.

In Book I Aristotle controverted two scientific or philosophic doctrines, those of Platonism and conventionalism, to establish the doctrine that the *polis* was a complex natural whole. In doing this, he pursues methods concerning which he makes two remarks near the beginning of Book I. It is his accustomed method, he says, to analyze a compound whole into its simplest, uncompounded elements. What he actually does, however, as he indicates, is rather to trace the genesis of the compound whole from the genesis of the elements of which it is compounded.[12] These two methods are not, of course, exclusive. Both speak of the whole and of the parts, but one begins from the parts and discovers from the parts that they must be compounded into a larger whole to fulfill their function as parts. The other begins with the whole, and discovers from the whole that it is resolved into parts whose functioning makes the whole. The parts discussed in Book I, however, are households or families; in Book III, citizens.

Aristotle's point of view in Book I is one of radical detachment from political life. He observes the *polis* as one among the number of

[12] Ibid., 1252[a] 18; 1252[a] 24.

forms of community which are the result of the gregarious natures of animals, and he wishes to classify it accurately in relation to the genera and sub-genera of which it is a species. In Book II he dissects the various specimens proposed as possessing the perfections upon which the most accurate classification might be based. In Book III, however, when he no longer treats of the opinions of others concerning the regime, but begins to present his own doctrine, he appears not as an external observer but as someone within the *polis*. The conflicts of opinions with which we are immediately confronted are no longer the conflicts between observers of political life, they are the conflicts among participants, among men who differ as to how the burdens and advantages of political life should be divided and shared. What is most significant about Aristotle's method in Book III is not so much that it is analytical in the sense indicated, but that it draws philosophic conclusions from the opinions of men who are neither philosophers nor legislators, but men who are contending for political advantages in political life.

The subdivisions of Book III are not marked in the same manner as those of Book II. This is Aristotle's exposition of his own doctrine and not the critique of other regimes; and there is a continuity in the argument, and a recurrence of themes, which it is not easy to anatomize. Some division of Book III, however provisional, is necessary for an orderly presentation. To begin with, Book III may be divided by the transition from the answer to the opening question, "Whatever is the *polis?*" to the question, "Is there one regime only, or many?"[13] It is a matter of speculation whether we should consider the discussion of monarchy as a third major subsection, or whether this continues and completes the discussion of regimes.[14] The discussion of monarchy begins by recalling that it is one of the "correct" regimes, but the form of monarchy which emerges as the most important topic of discussion is "*pambasileia.*" This is a kind of absolute rule, in which the king is to the *polis* as the head of the household to the household. It is thus called a kind of "economic" rule. But, since economic rule is fundamentally different from political rule, according to the general doctrine of the *Politics,* it cannot be assumed that this fifth form of monarchy is a form of regime properly so called. Therefore it is at least doubtful whether the discussion of monarchy, which culminates in the consideration of *pambasileia* or absolute monarchy, forms part of the discussion of the regime, or is a third major subsection of Book III.

The first subsection may be conveniently (although perhaps not definitively) divided into three subsections. First, the definition of the citizen (*politēs*) and therewith the *polis*. Second, the inquiry as to who is a

[13] Ibid., 1278^b 6.

[14] The discussion of monarchy begins at ibid., 1284^b 35.

citizen and what makes the *polis* the same (or different) when the regime changes because of revolution. Third, the first of the great disputations of Book III, Is the virtue of a good man and of a good citizen the same or different?

The definition of the citizen is required because it is a matter of dispute what the *polis* is. Some say that an action is an action of the *polis,* others that it is an action not of the *polis* but of the oligarchy or tyrant. Who are they who thus deny that an action is that of the *polis,* and what is that action? In considering the problem of revolution,[15] Aristotle makes explicit what is implicit at the beginning of Book III. When the regime changes from oligarchy or tyranny to democracy, the people may repudiate the public debt on the ground that the money was borrowed, not by the *polis,* but by the oligarchic clique or the tyrant. Hence the denial is a democratic denial of a financial obligation (and the action is the one of incurring debt). It is well to remember this when we discover that the first or "absolute" definition of citizenship applies more particularly to democracies than to other forms.

The absolute or unqualified definition of citizenship is that it is nothing other than a sharing in the administration of justice and in office. This means participating in what we would call legislation and adjudication, with these two "powers" being sufficiently broad to assimilate what we would understand by administration or execution of the laws. Indeed, Aristotle generalizes from this first definition, saying that what he really means is participation in "indefinite office." This definition, he then observes, fits democracy particularly well, but not necessarily other regimes. The idea of "indefinite office" fits democracy because there all free men constitute a body from whom officeholders are drawn, and nearly all free men participate in some offices (particularly those of jurymen, who had a wide variety of functions in ancient democracy, beyond those we assign to jurymen). But such a definition does not fit regimes such as Sparta or Carthage where political participation is narrowly limited and defined, that is, where few people hold any offices, and only some people can hold some offices. Nevertheless, the definition holds if we say that citizenship means participation in the deliberative and judicial functions of the *polis,* and that he is a citizen who can and does so participate. And, finally a *polis* is a collection of citizens numerous enough to lead a self-sufficient life.

Aristotle next considers the phenomenon we call "naturalization," which in turn leads us to the topic of revolution. In practice, he observes, they are called citizens who are born of citizen parents, but this is obviously inadequate, because the first citizens could not have had citizen parents. The question who, in fact, is a citizen is answered differently

[15] Ibid., 1276[a] 9 ff.

after a revolution, when different people exercise the powers by which citizen is properly defined. A regime which excludes many who formerly were citizens will regard those excluded as not having been rightly citizens. Conversely, those included by a new regime will regard the regime which formerly excluded them as not a regime, but a rule of force in contravention of law and justice. This, of course, is the view of a democracy which has overthrown a tyranny and repudiates the tyrant's debts. But, says Aristotle, if an action is repudiated on the ground that it is an act of force and not for the common good, then similar acts of democracies can also be repudiated as not truly being acts of the *polis*. The source of authority does not of itself indicate whether actions are impositions of mere force or are actions taken for the common good. In the opening passage of the inquiry as to where the ruling power should be, Aristotle is still more explicit on this point, as we shall see.[16]

When the *polis* changes in the manner just contemplated, what is it that enables us to say that it is the same *polis* or a different one? We have seen that a *polis* is a collection of citizens, but a revolutionary change will result in a different collection constituting the citizen body. Is it then a different *polis* or not? Aristotle first says what does not identify a *polis*. It is not a place, not even a place enclosed with a wall, for a wall around the Peloponnesus would not make those within the wall fellow citizens. Nor is it population, for the people of a *polis* are always dying and being born, like the water in a river which is ever changing, while the river itself remains the same. The *polis* is a community, a community constituted by a regime (*politeia*), and when the regime changes the *polis* is no longer the same, just as a tragic chorus is not the same as a comic chorus, although the persons of the two choruses may be identical. It is then *chiefly* (although Aristotle is careful not to say solely or exclusively) with respect to the regime that one must say that the *polis* is the same or different. But whether a *polis* which is a democracy should pay the debts of a tyrant whom the democracy has overthrown is not decided by this conclusion, which requires another argument. Aristotle never presents this argument, at least not overtly. We may perhaps infer it from the distinction which he next forces upon our attention: the distinction between a good man and a good citizen. Obligations which men may not have as citizens they may still have as men. If the citizens of a democracy benefited (whether intentionally or not) from the debts contracted by the tyrant, their obligations *as men* would surely be different from what they would be if the debts had been contracted entirely for the purpose of, let us say, unjustly suppressing the democracy.

We come then to a question for which the way has been prepared by the implicit suggestion that, while man as citizen is essentially a

[16] Ibid., 1281[a] 11 ff.

member of a regime, man as man may have obligations which do not arise from, and may not coincide with, those of his citizenship. That question is: Is the virtue of a good man and of a good citizen the same, or is it not the same? This third subsection of the first part of Book III is approximately equal in length to the first two together. Complex as the argument is, here, too, there appear to be three well-defined further subsections. First, there is a definition of the virtue of a citizen, which is not, speaking simply or unqualifiedly, the same as that of a good man. Second, there is the inquiry which reaches the conclusion that, while in general the virtue of good man and good citizen are different, they may coincide in the case of a good ruler. Third, there is an inquiry into whether all those admitted to a share of office—who are perforce citizens by the definition previously accepted—can in fact possess the virtue of citizens. To summarize: Aristotle first establishes the general difference between good man and good citizen; next he specifies the case in which a good citizen may be a good man; third, he specifies the cases in which a man *can* be the good citizen who will be a good man. It is most important for the student here to observe how Aristotle, in taking up a new question, enlarges and refines his answer to an old one. For the results of the inquiry in this subsection into the difference between human and civic goodness or virtue establish grounds for distinguishing different kinds of civic excellence that were not before visible. These, in turn, actually transform the definition of citizenship, while preparing as well for the discussion of regimes which follows.

Aristotle employs the familiar "ship of state" metaphor to explain "in outline" what is the virtue of a citizen. Each citizen is a partner, or sharer in a community, like a sailor on a ship. The sailors differ in their functions—one is an oarsman, another a helmsman, another a lookout—yet all share a common purpose, safety in navigation. So do citizens differ. In Book IV Aristotle lists nine different parts of which the *polis* is composed, beginning with the farming and mechanic classes, on through those who fight, who deliberate, and who judge.[17] Different forms of civic virtue would seem to correspond to the different functions of each of these parts of the *polis,* yet the good performance of the work of each part would have one and the same end: the safety of the regime (*politeia*). If, then, there are many forms of regime, there must be many forms of citizen virtue (in addition to the differences internal to each regime arising from the variety of functions therein), yet there can be only one form of excellence or virtue for man as man. Hence the virtue of a good man and of a good citizen cannot be identical.

Aristotle employs yet another argument to establish this conclusion. Not even the best regime could consist entirely of good men, yet if it were in fact the best regime every citizen would have to perform his duties

[17] Ibid., 1290b 38 ff.

as well as possible. Hence in the best regime it would appear that there would be some good citizens who were not good men. Still a third argument follows. A *polis* is a compound, even as an animal (of soul and body), a soul (of reason and desire), a household (of man and woman), and property (of master and slave). Every compound has a ruling and ruled elements,[18] and the virtue of ruling is evidently different from that of being ruled. Citizenship requires both forms of virtue, but the form of human goodness is one. Hence the virtue of a good man and of a good citizen cannot be the same.

The third argument of the foregoing series leads naturally to the question whether the virtue of a good man and of a good citizen—although they cannot be simply identical, because the virtue of citizenship is twofold—may not nonetheless coincide in a certain case, that of the good ruler. A statesman is a ruler, and hence must be wise in the sense of possessing a form of practical wisdom. (In the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Book VI, Aristotle distinguishes *phronesis,* practical wisdom, of which the virtue of the *politikos* or statesman is a branch, from *sophia,* or philosophic wisdom, which is concerned exclusively with thinking well and not with acting well.) A citizen, simply as citizen, may be a subject, not a ruler, and hence need not have the practical wisdom of a ruler. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* it is affirmed that the moral virtues, in the strict sense, imply the presence of practical wisdom, as the presence of practical wisdom implies the presence of moral virtue. Hence the citizen who does not have the practical wisdom of a ruler need not be even morally good in the highest sense. Nothing sums up this argument better than Aristotle's own example, given at the end of this discussion in the *Politics.* While other virtues may be common to ruler and ruled, practical wisdom (or one form of it) is the ruler's virtue alone. The subject, the man who is ruled, needs only right opinion. The latter is like the man who makes flutes; the ruler corresponds to the man who plays the flute. The virtue of a good man may then coincide with that of a good citizen in the case of the citizen (*politēs*) who is a statesman (*politikos*), who is a good ruler (*archon spoudaios*).

Next, Aristotle asks, Can anyone who is called a citizen by our previous definition—namely, participating in office—be truly a citizen? To put it slightly differently: Can *any* citizen (so called by us) be a good citizen, capable not only of being ruled, but of ruling, and hence of being a good man? The very intricate discussion of ruling and being ruled in the previous subsection, of which we have summarized only the conclusion, indicated that "ruling" and "being ruled" each has different meanings. Being ruled for certain purposes, for purposes which are in some sense

[18] Cf. ibid., Bk. I, esp. 1254[a] 20 ff., and the remark concerning the musical scale.

slavish, disqualifies a man for ruling, just as being ruled in certain other ways is part of the necessary training of a ruler. In some regimes—e.g., extreme democracies—men whose occupations are slavish—the mechanic classes—are admitted to citizenship, and while these men may be good citizens, in the sense that they can perform their civic duties well enough to preserve the democracy, they cannot be good men. The conclusion then follows that only under a regime which admits to citizenship only those men who are capable, by birth and training, of becoming good men, will it happen that any good citizen *can* be a good man. The final and strict conclusion of the entire discussion of good man and good citizen is then as follows: He who is capable of ruling (although he need not be an actual ruler), either alone or in conjunction with others, in a good regime (i.e., one which admits to citizenship only those capable of practical wisdom and moral virtue) is at once a good citizen and a good man.

We come now to the central sequence of topics of Book III. The first was initiated by the question, Whatever is the *polis?* The second, to which we now turn, is initiated by the question, Is there one regime or many? This second main section of Book III is divided as follows. First, an introduction setting forth the thematic question. Second, an answer to the twofold question, What is it for which the *polis* is instituted, and how many forms of rule are there? Third, an answer to the question, Who (or what) ought to be the ruling authority in the *polis?*[19]

The thematic question may be translated in full thus: Is there one regime, or many, and if many, what are they, how many, and what are the differences between them? There follows a brief definition of regime (*politeia*). It is an ordering (*taxis*) of the *polis* in respect of its offices, and chiefly in respect of the supreme office. The word "office" is, however, a narrow rendering, and the neologism "decision-maker" conveys something important that is lacking from that translation. What Aristotle means is that whoever makes the big and vital decisions for the political community thereby gives the community its structure and form. The "decision-makers" in the true political sense, as Aristotle would understand that term, combine what we normally understand by legal authority with the authority of the "establishment," in the currently fashionable sense of that term. They are, in other words, both legal sovereigns and ruling class in the traditional meaning. In a democracy, says Aristotle, the people are supreme, and in an oligarchy the few. The government (*politeuma*) is the regime (*politeia*), meaning that what causes the *polis* to have a certain form *is* the form.

The second subsection is devoted to answering a twofold question. What is it for the sake of which the *polis* is instituted, and how many forms of rule are there of man and of the community? Regimes, we are

[19] Ibid., 1278^{b} 6-15; 1278^{b} 15-1281^{a} 10; 1281^{a} 11-1284^{b} 34.

told, are distinguished in two ways: first, by the distinction between rightly constituted regimes and those which are wrongly constituted or deviant. Second, by the enumeration of the principal varieties of both the rightly and wrongly constituted. It is in establishing the basis for the distinction between rightly and wrongly constituted regimes that Aristotle gives the first elements of his answer to the question of the purpose of the *polis*. That purpose arises from the fact that man is, he repeats from Book I, a political animal. Men are drawn together not only by necessity (the main emphasis in Book I), but by a desire for the company of their fellows, without whom they could not live well. The aim of a common life is not the better supplying of necessities, but the good life. Still, they *do* need each other for the sake of mere life which has a sweetness which makes men cling to it as long as hardships are not unbearable. Next, Aristotle reviews the forms of subpolitical authority—master and slave, father and children, husband and wife—and then forms of nonpolitical authority—those of a trainer and of a pilot. He points out that rule is always either for a common good or for the good of the ruled. In the case of master and slave, the good is primarily that of the master, but they *do* have a common good, because the deterioration of the slave will deteriorate the master's good. At the other extreme, the trainer and pilot consider essentially only the advantage of those under their direction and benefit themselves only incidentally: the trainer as he happens to take exercise himself while exercising his pupil, and the pilot as he happens also to travel on the ship he steers. By nature, a man holding office is like the trainer and pilot, as in looking after the welfare of his fellow citizens, he thereby stands in need of assistance from them in his own private affairs, which he neglects while attending to the common or public concerns. In the present corrupt times, says Aristotle, men seek office avidly, as a means of advancing their private welfare rather than that of the public. Here then we see the nerve of the distinction between rightly and wrongly constituted regimes: it lies in the distinction between regimes in which the rulers, like practitioners of the art of gymnastics or of sailing, rule those in their charge solely for the good of the ruled (and hence require some recompense for their neglect of their private good while thus occupied) or, on the contrary, consider their offices as sources of private profit.[20]

Next Aristotle gives the number and names of the varieties of regimes. To name the regime means to name the government, or ruling group, and this must be either one man, or a few, or the many. When these govern toward the common advantage they are rightly constituted, and when not, they are deviations from the right forms. The usual designation for the rule of one when it is for the common advantage is

[20] The student should compare this passage of the *Politics* with the Thrasymachus section of the *Republic* of Plato, Bk I, and in particular 345^{a}-347^{e}.

kingship, that of a few aristocracy, that of the many polity (*politeia*), which is also the generic name for all regimes. Deviations are: tyranny corresponding to kingship, oligarchy to aristocracy, and democracy to polity. In the first, the single ruler considers only his own interest; in the second, it is the interest of the rich which governs; and in the third, the interest of the poor. In none of the deviant regimes do the rulers think of a common interest, but only of themselves.

Next Aristotle elaborates upon the foregoing distinctions, with especial reference to the difference between democracy and oligarchy. He introduces this elaboration with the unusual remark—for the *Politics*—that for one who is philosophizing, and not merely looking into a subject with a view to practice, it is proper not to overlook or omit anything, but to set forth the truth. The remark is unusual because of the emphasis, in both the *Ethics* and *Politics,* upon the essentially practical nature of these disciplines.[21] The difference between democracy and oligarchy is then *not* primarily the difference between the rule of the many and of the few, for if there were few poor and many rich the rule of the many would not be democratic nor the rule of the few oligarchic. Democracy is essentially rule of the poor and incidentally rule of the many, and oligarchy is essentially rule of the rich and incidentally rule of the few, although, Aristotle observes, the rich are everywhere few, and the many everywhere poor. The particular importance of this theoretical distinction may lie in the peculiar practical importance of democracy and oligarchy as the two regimes which in practice dominate political struggles. And it is also true that it is from the opinions—the erroneous but complementary opinions—of the partisans of democracy and oligarchy that Aristotle compounds the true opinion which is the basis of his own doctrine concerning distributive justice.

We come now to the exposition of oligarchic and democratic justice, or rather to a discourse nominally devoted to this theme, but actually devoted to extracting from the exposition the answer to the broader question of the true purpose of the *polis,* which is the general topic of the entire section. First, Aristotle explains that all men lay hold of a kind of justice. The one kind of partisan says that it is equality, and so it is, *for equals.* The other kind says that it is inequality, and so it is, *for unequals.* Men are bad judges in their own cases. They state the case only to the point it serves their narrow interest, and not as it stands truly. Justice is a relation between things and persons—e.g., positions of honor and trust on the one hand, and men to fill them on the other—and the partisans see very well what is equal or unequal in the division of such places. But they fail to see what it is that makes the men who are to fill them equal or unequal. Those who are freemen think that if they are

[21] Cf. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094^{b} 11-27, 1198^{a} 25, and 1103^{b} 26.

equal as freemen, they are equal in every respect; those who are rich think that if they are unequal in wealth they are unequal in every respect. But the ruling principle, the truly authoritative consideration they never mention.

Next, Aristotle expounds this ruling or sovereign consideration. It is, of course, that the *polis* exists, not for the sake of life, but for the good life. The fallacy of the partisans is that they confuse the necessary conditions of political life with the sufficient conditions. The oligarchic fallacy would appear to consist in mistaking the *polis* for a kind of joint stock company, in which the man who contributed 99 percent of the capital is rightly entitled to a larger share, either of principal or profit, than the man who contributed only 1 percent. On the other hand (and this seems to refer to the democratic partisans), the *polis* is not a military alliance for protection against injury. Mere self-preservation would characterize as well a community of slaves or lower animals. But again, neither is it an association for trade. The Etruscans and Carthaginians have commercial relations, but they are not fellow citizens. Aristotle cites approvingly the Sophist Lycophron, who said that the law is a pledge or surety of men's just claims against each other. [22] Indeed it is, but abstaining from injustice is not sufficient to make men fellow citizens. Men who abstain from injustice are not for that reason good or just. (The man who practices honesty because it is the best policy is not for that reason honest.) Good government implies a concern with political virtue and vice.

Having pointed out that neither the virtues engendered by trade nor those engendered by war are in and of themselves to be equated with political virtue, Aristotle considers locality. Megara and Corinth would not be one city even if enclosed within the same walls, not even if the citizens of each intermarried, although intermarriage is an important element in making a community. Nor, again, if they lived close together and exchanged goods, as do carpenter, farmer, shoemaker, and in addition were in military alliance, and yet abstained from wrongdoing.

The sufficient conditions of political life will not, of course, be realized without the foregoing necessary conditions—in particular inhabiting the same locality and practicing intermarriage. These conditions are accompanied by the various forms of social life which go beyond mere utility—e.g., fraternal, religious, recreational associations—which, however, arise not from material needs, but from friendship. Friendship—as Aristotle makes clear at great length in Books VIII and IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics*—means active concern for others, a concern with their well-being, which means with their capacity for welldoing. This in turn means a concern with their capacity for virtuous activity, from which happiness

[22] This may be the best single approximation to what is understood by the *state*, as distinct from the *polis*. See above, p. 11.

results. And so the political community is above all a community for the sake of acting well (or nobly), or for the sake of happiness. Those who contribute most to enabling friends and fellow citizens to become virtuous and live happily have the larger share in the *polis*. They alone are politically superior, be they never so equal or inferior to others in freedom, birth, or wealth.

Next, Aristotle asks, Who (or what) ought to be the supreme ruling authority in the *polis?* This, we might observe, is the supreme political question, for upon the answer to this question every other political question depends. We have been told that oligarchy and democracy are defective regimes, because they mistake contributions to the necessary conditions of the political community's existence for contributions to its true end or purpose; that is, they mistake contributions to the wealth or freedom of the *polis*—things without which there cannot be a *polis,* but which in themselves do not make a *polis*—for contributions to living happily and well. But what weight do we give to the various claims put forward by those who compete for rule? A *polis* is neither a trading community nor a military alliance, but if we reject the claims of the wealthy and the free (those who pay taxes and those who fight), we may not have a *polis* at all. The attempt to realize the higher aims of the *polis* must not be such as to destroy the material conditions which are necessary for the existence of the *polis*, just as the recognition of the material necessities cannot justifiably inhibit the attainment of happiness and a good life.

The subsection we are about to examine is by far the longest of Book III, and in a sense the culminating theoretical analysis of the entire book, and of the entire *Politics.* Let us then describe the topography of this subsection, however provisional the grouds of our distinctions may seem. First, there is an introduction, setting forth the main question, and the other questions into which this main one resolves itself. Second, there is an inquiry into and partial vindication of the claim of the many to rule, as opposed to that of the few best. Third, there is the inquiry into the question into which the opening question is now seen to resolve itself.[23] Justice is the political good, and justice means equality for equals and inequality for unequals, but Equality and Inequality in What?

Turning now to the introductory subsection, we meet the thematic question, What ought to be the ruling authority in the *polis?* The claimants are: the many, the rich, the good, the one best of all, and the tyrant. These correspond to the six regimes enumerated earlier, with the notable difference that "the many" is the numerical and thus ambiguous ground for both democracy and polity. "The many" as such is neither rich nor poor nor, presumably, good nor bad. This is, of course, only ab-

[23] Aristotle *Politics* 1281^a 11-39; 1281^a 39-1282^b 13 and 1282^b 14-1284^b 34.

stractly or theoretically true, and Aristotle characteristically proceeds in a "practical" vernacular. The recognition of the claim to supreme authority by any of these claimants, Aristotle says, appears to have disagreeable consequences. Suppose, for example, the poor divide up the property of the rich. Is this not the extreme of injustice? "By Zeus, it was justly passed by the ruling authority." Thus the response of the partisans of the many, i.e., of the poor and of democracy. It is one of two oaths in the *Politics,* and that it justifies what is characterized as extreme injustice is not without ironical significance. Also, we must recall that the definition of the *polis* called for at the beginning of Book III was required because of the democratic (and possibly unjust) repudiation of the debts of the oligarchy or of the tyrant. That the many identify their authority with their manyness (instead of with their poverty, which is the real reason they seize the wealth of the few) is shown next by the identification of their authority with majority rule. Suppose then, Aristotle asks, the majority again expropriates the minority? Clearly, the principle which justifies expropriation on the ground that the many are the *polis* is a monster which eventually devours even itself. But justice is not a destructive principle, and therefore the rule of the many, as such, cannot be a principle of justice. Similar considerations rule out the authority of the rich as rich, or of a tyrant.

But what about the claims of the good? Now Aristotle introduces a still greater perplexity. That neither the poor nor the rich have an unfettered right to rule is clear. But this does not mean they have no claims upon authority whatever. Offices are honors, and to be excluded from office is to be excluded from honor. The unqualified rule of the good would seem unjustly to dishonor classes which do contribute to the common good, by contributing to the necessities without which the *polis* cannot be. And the rule of the one best man would seem to carry the foregoing "oligarchical" tendency to a further extreme. But there are those who say that the law should rule. Yet the law itself can be democratic or oligarchic, so that the same difficulty recurs. Here, then, we have the formulation of the problem of this subsection, and the indication as well that there is no solution in terms of any of the regimes mentioned. However, we already noticed that neither democracy nor polity has been explicitly mentioned in the beginning of this introduction, only the many, who are as such the numerical ground for either democracy or polity. In the difficulties presented by the different kinds of claims, we saw the many referred to in the practical terms of their antagonism to the rich. That their claims need not rest upon their poverty, however, and that a regime of the many need not be identical with democracy, it is Aristotle's immediate concern to demonstrate.

In Book IV Aristotle defines polity as a mixture of two "deviant"

regimes, democracy and oligarchy.[24] Here, however, he presents the claims of the many as corresponding nevertheless to the claims of virtue. The claims of virtue would appear to be the only intrinsically valid claims, but the recognition of the claims of virtue is not identical with the recognition of the claims of the virtuous. In the first place, the virtuous are somewhat backward in presenting their claims. Aristotle has indicated,[25] in agreement with Socrates in the *Republic,* that the good man will regard office as at best a kind of duty which he must perform in neglect of his own private interests. Another way of putting this is to say that there is a kind of selfishness in the good which causes them to draw back from, if not to turn away from, political competition as insufficiently rewarding. Illustrative of this is the statement in Book V[26] that those who excel in virtue are the ones who might most justly make a revolution (when others with inferior claims are preferred to them), but that they are the ones least likely to do so. To some extent the political problem is one of compounding the simulacra of virtue in the nonvirtuous, as a device rendered necessary by the withdrawal of the virtuous from active contention. To some extent it arises from a different inadequacy of true virtue. First, there are not likely to be enough virtuous men to constitute a *polis.*[27] Next is the fact that virtue is related to the sufficient rather than the necessary conditions of political life. But virtue as productive of sufficient conditions is not necessarily productive of necessary conditions. There is a kind of disproportion between the necessary and sufficient conditions of political life which makes a genuine equation between political honors and political contributions peculiarly difficult, perhaps impossible. *Political virtue,* as we shall see, is a kind of facsimile of true virtue,[28] a facsimile which compounds certain resemblances to virtue in nonvirtue, to give greater dignity to nonvirtue, and which compounds certain resemblances to nonvirtue in virtue, to give greater political effectiveness to virtue. We now witness Aristotle's laborious attempt, in principle, to achieve such a compound. We say "in principle," because it is in Books IV, V, and VI that he does so in any detail. To some extent, the obscurity which surrounds much of the ensuing argument arises from the danger to political life of expounding too openly the indirectness whereby virtue can become politically effective. That is to say, political virtue which is not confused with strict virtue will not be politically effective, and hence will not be political virtue!

[24] Ibid., 1293^{b} 29.
[25] Ibid., 1279^{a} 8 ff.
[26] Ibid., 1301^{b} 1.
[27] Ibid., 1283^{b} 10.
[28] Cf. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1162^{a} 17, on the distinction between genuine courage and political.

The claim of the many to rule in a good regime is recognized as follows: the many, while individually not good men, may be collectively better than those who are superior to each of them separately. Aristotle gives three analogical examples. A feast to which many contribute is better than a feast supplied at one man's cost. The many judge works of music and poetry better, for one man judges one part of a work, another another, and together they judge the whole with superior judgment. The superiority of the painter's art over reality lies in this: he can select the beautiful eyes of this one, some other superior feature from someone else, and so on, so that the painted figure combines the excellences which in nature are scattered among many. The first example corresponds to the refutation of the claims of the rich: the many poor may yet be collectively wealthier than the wealthy few. The second example, involving deliberation and judgment, refutes the claims of the few good. The third example deals with the claims of the one best man: the many may equal or excel him, not individually but collectively. The argument derived from these examples requires the qualification Aristotle promptly adds: it may justify the popular claims to a share in the regime of *some* multitude (or *dēmos*), but not of any and every one. We have already seen the many characterized by the extreme of injustice, as in the passage in which the people swear by Zeus to justify expropriation, believing it right simply because they have decreed it. We must again recall that the question of what the *polis* is arose because of the democratic denial of a debt. Whether this argument (namely, of collective virtue in the many) applies to every people and every multitude, Aristotle says, is unclear, or, rather, he says, "perhaps, by Zeus, concerning every one it is clearly impossible, because the same argument could apply to beasts; and how, so to speak, do some multitudes differ from beasts?" Thus does Aristotle, in the second (and final) oath employed in the *Politics,* balance the emphatic speech of the many in justifying the extreme of injustice with an oath which insists that they are sometimes bestial. At the same time, we are warned of the limitations of an argument which, explicitly deriving from analogies, justifies no more than an analogical virtue.[29]

The argument from collective virtue is next used to decide what offices may, and what may not, be safely entrusted to a *qualified* multitude. They must not participate in the highest offices. By this Aristotle here means those offices for which collective virtue manifestly cannot be a substitute for the virtue of a single man, as would be the case of such modern offices as president, prime minister, cabinet officers, supreme court justices, or speakers and leaders of legislative assemblies. But offices which contribute to collective deliberation and judgment—e.g., voters,

[29] Cf. the resemblance of bestial courage to true courage, in ibid., 1116^{b} 10ff.

members of legislative assemblies, juries petty and grand, and so on—could be filled by and from the many.

Finally, there is a discussion of whether the idea of collective virtue of a lay public does not contradict the experience of the other arts. Aristotle considers the case of medicine, as he had earlier compared politics to the art of the trainer and pilot. The demand for trained intelligence does not, he concludes rule out the general public, for even in medicine there are qualified nonexperts who can judge the work of experts. The argument from the arts further rules out a brutalized public, but not every public. It leads to Aristotle's final conclusion in this context: the possibility of utilizing collective virtue in a properly circumscribed role demonstrates nothing so much as the need for good laws. For, he implies, the circumscription of the people to their proper functions, and of the higher officials to theirs, as well as the education of both in the requisite virtues, is the work of good laws.

We come now to the third and final subsection of the subsection addressed to the question, Who (or what) ought to be the supreme authority in the *polis?* The problem has been stated, and the claims of the many (under the conditions favorable to those claims) have received their due. Even under favorable conditions, those claims are met without admitting the many to the *supreme* offices. Justice is the political good, and justice is a kind of equality. Common opinion agrees with philosophy in this, that justice is a relation of things and persons, and that to equal persons equal things are due. Offices are honors, and justice demands therefore that for men who are equal there should be equal honors, and for men who are unequal, unequal honors. There is generally no difficulty in discerning whether offices and honors are equal or unequal. But in what is it that men are to be held to be either equal or unequal? This problem, Aristotle says, calls for political philosophy.

In thus defining this supreme political problem, Aristotle twice uses the word "philosophy" as in the foregoing paraphrase. These are the second and third (and last) times the word occurs in Book III. The first time, we recall, was when Aristotle said that for one "philosophizing" (the verb rather than the noun was used) nothing ought to be overlooked or omitted, whether of practical significance or not.[30] What was inquired into then was the essential difference between oligarchy and democracy. That was found to consist in a difference in quality which had no necessary connection with the *numerical* difference between the many and the few. This rejection of a numerical distinction corresponded with Aristotle's opening polemic in Book I against the reduction of the different forms of rule to differences in the *number* of those ruling or ruled.

[30] Aristotle *Politics* 1279^{b} 12.

Now, in seeking the thing whose proportions in different men determine the proportions according to which political honors and offices ought to be awarded, we are again concerned with relationships between quantities and qualities.

This becomes more evident when we turn to the thesis which Aristotle now investigates with a view to deciding the matter. "Perhaps someone would say that offices should be distributed unequally according to every excess of a good." According to this thesis, if men are in other respects alike, yet one is taller or has a better complexion, then he should be awarded the office. The fallacy of this thesis, says Aristotle, is evident if we compare the awarding of offices to the awarding of flutes. Among flute-players equally good at playing the flute, we do not give better flutes to the better born. Let us digress, however, and ask whether the idea that a superiority in birth or beauty can contribute to superiority in flute-playing is simply absurd or whether, like many other opinions, it merely requires correction. Good birth is called virtue of race by Aristotle, which also means inherited virtue. Strictly speaking, of course, virtue cannot be inherited, because it is the result of habituation (moral virtue) or teaching (intellectual virtue). Yet there is a kind of virtue[31] which is really an aptitude for virtue, called by Aristotle natural virtue. No one is, strictly speaking, a born musician or mathematician, although we call someone a born musician or mathematician if he becomes one with very little teaching. Similarly, some are born with an aptitude for courage or temperance if, with very little moral education, they become brave or self-controlled. Such aptitudes, or natural virtues, can be inherited. Aristotle says in Book I that nature intends to make the bodies of freemen as different from those of slaves as the statues of the gods differ from those of men.[32] In the same way that nature fails to make freemen visibly different from slaves, she fails to make the sons of good men good. If nature succeeded, however, the ordering of society would be relatively simple.[33] As superior bodies and superior minds would go together, the different kinds of education appropriate to the different kinds of souls would be indicated by the different shapes of their bodies. And the different offices would be allocated by the different virtues resulting from the different kinds of education. Hence good birth, beauty, and virtue would be found together in the regime which was thus truly according to nature. Good birth and beauty would not literally contribute to flute-playing, but aptitude in flute-playing would very likely be found among those who were well-born and beautiful. More important, political virtue would certainly be found

[31] Cf. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1144^b 3ff.
[32] Aristotle *Politics* 1254^b 26ff.
[33] Cf. ibid., Bk. VII, 1332^b 17ff.

among the well-born and beautiful and never among the ill-born and ugly. That we picture the gods as superior in beauty no less than in wisdom is itself far from being politically irrelevant.

In this connection we should consider again Aristotle's example of the painter who collects from many their individual points of perfection—e.g., nose, eyes, foot, hand—to produce a portrait of a perfection surpassing that of any one human being. The painter, in combining these many perfections, achieves what nature intended but failed to achieve. Art thus perfects nature in one sense, while in another sense it is nature which perfects art. For in the latter sense it is nature which enables the artist to achieve perfection by teaching him what he must do to achieve perfection. The political philosopher might then be thought of as the artist of the *polis.*

Suppose, Aristotle continues, someone superior in flute-playing, yet inferior in birth and beauty. Suppose, moreover, that good birth and beauty surpass flute-playing more than the best flute-player can surpass all other flute-players. Even so, says Aristotle, we would award the superior flute to the superior flute-player, be he never so inferior in birth and beauty. To suppose that any superiority in birth and beauty could compensate for an inferiority in flute-playing, when it came to a distribution of flutes, would imply that birth and beauty could in some way contribute to flute-playing, which they cannot. The argument Aristotle here controverts implies, he says, the commensurability of every good with every other good. We cannot help being reminded by this observation of the critique of the Platonic idea of the good in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics.* According to the Platonic doctrine, as there presented by Aristotle, there is one idea or form of goodness, which is the cause of what is good in every good thing. It would follow from this doctrine that the intrinsic goodness in every good thing is identical with the goodness in every other good thing. From this it would follow that, with respect only to their goodness, they could differ only as more and less, and to such differences numerical values could be assigned.

Why does Aristotle recur to this abstruse metaphysical issue? If the argument from flutes were not sufficient, does not his further example suffice: that athletic prowess is properly rewarded, not by political office, but by athletic prizes? The difficulty here, it seems, lies in the inner inconsistency in the two kinds of opinions upon which Aristotle draws for his conception of distributive justice. On the one hand, opinion says that justice is equality for equals and inequality for unequals. Birth, wealth, and freedom are qualities needed for the existence of the *polis,* hence they and not flute-playing or speed of foot are properly considered with a view to political honors. The same is true of justice and political virtue. The

difference between flute-playing and wealth is a difference between nonpolitical and political goods. The difference between wealth and political virtue is a difference between what contributes to the existence and what contributes to the good government of the *polis*. If no amount of a nonpolitical good can equal a political good, can any amount of a necessary good, e.g., wealth, equal any amount of a sufficient good, e.g., virtue? If it cannot, how can the equation of honors or offices with merit be true? In Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics* we find the formula for distributive justice.[34] It is, says Aristotle, a species of the proportionate, and the proportionate is equality of ratios. In a just distribution, as A is to B, so C is to D. That is, as the merit of A is to the merit of B, so is the honor C (awarded to A) to the honor D (awarded to B). Now if these are genuine ratios, the terms must be commutable. Thus, not only will A/B equal C/D, but A/C will equal B/D. Furthermore, AD will equal CB. But, and here is the crux of the entire matter, if AD equals CB, then *some* multiple of A's excellence equals *some* multiple of B's excellence. But if this is true—as, strictly speaking, it must be—then we are confronted with a dilemma. Either the excellences to be rewarded—namely, A's and B's—must be homogeneous, of one kind, or excellences different in kind are commensurable.

Let us be absolutely clear as to the nature of the foregoing dilemma, for it appears to be the central theoretical problem of the *Politics*. The dilemma stems from the two opinions whose combination yields the formula for distributive justice. One of those opinions is that justice is an equality of ratios. This opinion is itself a philosophic refinement of the nonphilosophic opinions which are the defining characteristics of oligarchic and democratic justice, the former holding that justice is inequality, the latter that it is equality. Combining the two, Aristotle holds that justice is equality for equals, and inequality for unequals, and hence equality of ratios. The other opinion, besides that which holds justice to be equality of ratios, is the one that holds that goods different in kind are incommensurable. But how can one find a set of ratios that will justly relate the claims of wealth and/or freedom, on the one hand, and virtue on the other, unless some amount of wealth and/or freedom will equal some amount of virtue? Or, conversely, how can we deny that some amount of wealth and/or freedom will equal some amount of virtue, unless we deny that justice is an equality of ratios which comprehend the *different* contributions to the common good? We must again recall that the first two books of the *Politics* are pre-eminently devoted to demonstrating that the *polis* is a compound of elements different in kind, to

[34] Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1131^{a} 10-1131^{b} 24.

which there correspond virtues or excellences different in kind. In the light of this analysis we can regard the *Republic* of Plato as an attempt to resolve this dilemma by the hypothesis that justice is one and the same in a single man and in a *polis*. The unity sought by Socrates in the *Republic* seemed, however, to reduce the *polis* to a family and the family to one man. This, Aristotle said, does not unify the *polis* but destroys it. Since justice is the preservative, not the destroyer, of political life, this cannot be in accordance with justice. However, we may consider whether Plato took but one horn of the dilemma. If justice demands an equality of ratios, and if such equality cannot be realized unless the different qualities which contribute to the common good are somehow rendered commensurate, then to insist upon the incommensurability of different qualities may also lead to the denial of the possibility of justice.

Aristotle will not sacrifice heterogeneity to homogeneity, nor homogeneity to heterogeneity. His argument seems to turn from the critique of each of these conflicting theses to the critique of the other. And his solution to the problem seems thereby to bear a striking resemblance to the problem itself. We may barely hazard the opinion that the theoretical dilemma which appears to lie at the heart of the analysis of the constituent elements of distributive justice may constitute a ground for rejecting pure theory as a ground for a practical discipline. It may be observed that the doctrine of virtue as the mean, as the right intermediate point between two vicious extremes, in the *Nicomachean Ethics,* is a seemingly mathematical formulation, which proves to be true only in an analogical sense. Virtue is an intermediate point between two extremes, but not a point whose distance from other points can be measured. Something similar is true of Aristotle's solution to the problem of distributive justice, a solution which reflects the theoretical understanding implicit in the grasping of the aforesaid dilemma, but reflects it rather in its negation of the necessity which constitutes the dilemma.

What then is Aristotle's emphatically practical solution? Its principle may be found in the recognition of the claims of the many, which now appears not so much as the recognition of these claims per se as the formula for the commensuration of excellences different in kind. The claims of the many, as they themselves understand those claims, are based upon the freedom of the many. The many think that because they are equal to the rich in freedom they ought to be equal in everything. Aristotle, however, finds a ratio between the claims of the many, on the one hand, and those of the rich and the good, on the other, not by comparing freedom with wealth and virtue, but by comparing the collective wealth and the collective virtue of the many with the collective wealth and virtue of the few. Again, the rich need not only be rich, but may be free and virtuous. And the good may possess not only virtue, but

wealth and freedom. In short, each class of claimant can be compared with every other in respect of the claim of the *other,* and in *this* way, heterogeneity can *practically* be homogenized. It may be observed that the class with the intrinsically best claim, that of virtue, is least convincingly collectivized, in respect of the claims of the other classes, and the class with the intrinsically poorest claim, the poor, is most convincingly collectivized. Yet the practical problem is to bring together the extremes, to give the many a claim which will elevate them, and yet restrain them by the very thing that gives them dignity. The many, to repeat, may be lacking in any example of outstanding excellence yet collectively may—in a certain sense—equal or excel in virtue the few, just as they may equal or excel the few in wealth. By teaching the many that the ground of their recognition is not their collective strength, their weight in numbers as freemen, but their collective virtue, a bond is formed between them and the higher classes, in consequence of which the poor gain the respect of the upper classes while gaining as well a motive to earn that respect.

The wealthy, as we also saw, tend to identify political superiority with wealth alone. But as the wealthy see that the poor may collectively make a considerable claim upon the ground of wealth, they will be less inclined to push the argument from wealth, and more inclined to recognize virtue and freedom. Again, the wealthy may also be brought to see that one of their own number may be wealthier than all of the rest of them together. But the wealthy are not likely to wish to be subordinated absolutely to one of their own class either: they are more apt to be inclined to moderate their demands as a class, and rather seek security in a balancing of the different claims of the different classes. The same argument can be applied to the claims of virtue: the advocates of aristocracy do not really wish to yield their claims to virtue alone, when such a claim would result in one man rule; nor, again, would they yield it to the many, if and as the many could prove the superiority of their collective virtue. We can then sum up Aristotle's resolution of the problem of distributive justice as follows. The *polis* is a compound, which requires men who are well born (of good stock) and hence capable of assuming the responsibilities of free citizens; it requires as well men who are wealthy; it requires also men who are good. It requires all these things, in a certain proportion, a proportion which cannot be decided by abstract reasoning alone, but finally only by perception of the facts in each individual case. Those who are wealthy can rightly demand recognition of their claims, a recognition which will neither overbear, nor be overborne by, the claims of others. Since the wealthy, as wealthy, will not be virtuous, it may be pointed out to them, if they try to absolutize their claims, that the many or the one may be collectively wealthier than they are. Similarly, if the aristocrats absolutize their claims, it can be pointed out to them that

either the one or the many may be more virtuous than they. The case of the many differs slightly: the argument from their freedom Aristotle at the end resolves into an argument from good birth (for what distinguishes a freeman from a slave is a good nature), and here again it can be maintained that one or a few may be better born than many. The argument for good birth is at bottom but an attenuated version of the argument for virtue, because a good nature is one with a capacity for virtue. Thus the argument for the many is at bottom an argument for virtue which is fully recognized in the argument for collective virtue. And this, to bring the wheel full circle again, means an argument which, if pushed too far, will justify the claims of the few or the one against the many no less than it will justify the argument for the many. As each rival claimant moderates his claim, in the light of the awareness that it can be turned against him the idea of a common good in which the rival claims are harmonized emerges. And the idea of the common good necessarily implies both a limitation upon the absolutized claims of each party—including that of virtue—and a priority of the claims of virtue. Here, then, is Aristotle's resolution of the problem of distributive justice, the just decision of the rival claims to supreme authority in the *polis*.

There is, however, a corollary to the foregoing solution of the problem of distributive justice, and this corollary supplies as well the transition to the subject of monarchy and from monarchy to the other regimes, the regimes which are more important for political practice than those treated in Book III. The quasi-mathematical formula for distributive justice is a means of reconciling the competing claims for political supremacy. In it virtue itself appears as merely one of a number of such claims, although we must recognize a paradox in the play upon different meanings of virtue. Virtue is always directed toward the support of the common good, and yet the common good means a good in which the claims of virtue are moderated to accommodate other claims. What, however, does one do if there is someone whose virtue is so great that no "proportion" is possible between his virtue and the virtue of others?

Let us illustrate the problem by taking wealth, rather than virtue, as the quality to be "proportioned." In so far as wealth is a claim to political office, a rich man who is twice as wealthy as another rich man deserves an office that is twice as important. It would be plausible, for example, to say that the office of secretary of the Treasury of the United States is twice as important as the office of undersecretary. But if there is a man who is a thousand, or ten thousand, times as rich as his next richest fellow citizen, then obviously no such plausible proportion can be imagined, for it is not possible to imagine one office that is one ten-thousandth that of another. Any actual allocation of offices will then either overvalue the inferior claimant or undervalue the superior. If we think, however, not

of the impossibility of adjusting the claims of two rich men, but of rich and poor, we see that the excessively rich man is, in a sense, the common enemy of both the rich and the poor. The only solution, then, for dealing with someone who is so excessively rich or otherwise powerful is to banish or ostracize him, for he destroys the basis of the reconciliation of competing claims, and hence of the common good. Or, to be more precise, one must either banish him or make him the absolute and sole ruler. In the case of the other claims, ostracism is, Aristotle says, politically just. But in the case of the man who is "excessive" in virtue, which now means excessive in his propensity and ability to serve the common good, a good in which the claims of virtue are moderated in so far as they can *be* moderated, given the qualities present in a community for compounding a common good, this would be a contradiction in terms. In such a case, the only just alternative is to make the man absolute and sole monarch. To repeat: the harmonizing of the claims of the rich and the poor depends upon the poor having sufficient wealth, and the rich having sufficient numbers, so that each can make a claim upon the grounds advanced by the other. But if one man is too rich or too popular, so that this moderation of conflicting claims is rendered impracticable, then it becomes just to ostracize him, as one who makes the common good impracticable. But if one man upsets this balance not by his excess of wealth or other forms of political power, but by his vurtue, then it is not just to ostracize him, and he must rather be made king.

This leads us to the final problem of Book III. We have seen that the common good normally leads to a balancing and harmonizing of competing claims, but sometimes demands unfettered and unqualified recognition of the claims of virtue alone. Which is better? The unhampered absolute rule of the one best man, or the rule of the best laws? For the rule of harmonized, competing claims must be a rule of laws. As it is a rule which prescribes that different men take turns in ruling, it therefore prescribes boundaries to the power of men who take up and lay down their offices, as they do so not at their own discretion, but at that of the law. Aristotle's arguments, both pro and con, are substantially the same as those in Plato's *Statesman.*[35] The decisive reflection is that politics both resembles and yet differs from the other arts, such as medicine. Certainly the doctor ought not to be restrained by written rules, so that he can only choose among treatments set down in a medical handbook, after having similarly chosen among diagnoses. Yet if the patient suspected the physician of being in league with his enemies, he might well prefer inferior medical treatment, and prefer even to doctor himself "by the book" than

[35] See Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (eds.), *History of Political Philosophy,* 2nd ed., (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1972), pp. 48-50.

take a chance that his heirs had made a deal to divide the insurance money with the physician. In the case of politics, we must inevitably suspect of interested motives anyone who puts forward a claim to absolute rule on the ground of superior wisdom and virtue. Still, the intrinsic validity of the claim in the case of *someone*—a someone very unlikely to put the claim forward himself—is not hereby destroyed. Aristotle's final conclusion appears to be that the argument stands as valid, but as the man who could justly make the claim will not do so, the only argument that can and will be validly advanced will be that in favor of the best laws. Still, in the infinite contingencies of political life, a moment might come when, contrary to every normal expectation, the rule of the one best man might have to be advanced in practice as well.

Books IV, V, and VI of the *Politics* are the pre-eminently "practical" books, wherein are applied the principles developed in Books I through III. The opening chapters of Book IV read almost like the beginning of a new treatise. Book III began with a question, Whatever is the *polis?* We were immediately plunged into a controversy, a controversy caused by the repudiation by a victorious democracy of debts contracted by a tyrant. The political philosopher appears in Book III as an arbiter or umpire, finding the element of justice and of injustice in the self-interested assertions and claims of partisans. He alone sees the whole of which the partisans are part. Thus he alone possesses the principle which recognizes the part which each partisan occupies in the whole, and thus can reward him in proportion to the importance of that part. Now the political philosopher appears in a different role, a somewhat less elevated but not less indispensable one. He is likened by Aristotle to the gymnastic or athletic trainer.

A practical program for politics would model itself upon gymnastics. The athletic trainer is not only concerned with the perfect regimen for the perfect physique, but must know how to prescribe for anyone who seeks his assistance. This means knowing what is good for the generality of men no less (in practice, a good deal more) than for the topflight athlete, and not only for the generality but for those with special needs and special handicaps. In like manner, the political teacher must know not only what is the absolutely best regime, but what regime is best for each of the different kinds of political communities. For most, the absolutely best would be as impossible and as undesirable as the training program of an Olympic champion would be for an overweight middle-aged businessman. A political teacher should know of a regime that is not only desirable and possible for most *poleis* but one which they can be easily persuaded to adopt. And for those who cannot adopt this second-best, generally practicable standard, he must have a further range of alterna-

tives: he must know what would be best for each particular community, taking into full account its local peculiarities and shortcomings.

The first requirement for carrying out the foregoing assignment is to have available a full classification of regimes. In Book III Aristotle set out the basic forms of government, the three correct and the three deviant regimes. Now, however, he says that it is as important (perhaps more important in practice) to know the different varieties of each form, e.g., to know the different kinds of democracy and oligarchy, as to know the difference between democracy and oligarchy. For the attempt to establish an aristocracy, let us say, when only a democracy is feasible, may lead to disaster. But the attempt to set up one kind of democracy, when only another kind will work well, may also lead to disaster.

Aristotle now gives as the cause of the variety of regimes the variety of parts from which all *poleis* are compounded. In Book III we saw the variety of regimes as due, in the main, to the different principles by which men justified their claims to supremacy, and in particular wealth, freedom, and virtue. Now we see a still greater variety of regimes due to the variety of functions within the *polis* that must be performed by the rich, the poor, and the good. Aristotle lists these as the parts of the *polis:* farmers, artisans, merchants, unskilled laborers, warriors, judges, councillors, the rich, and magistrates. The many are thus seen to include such different elements as the farmers, the artisans, and the merchants, all of whom may be either rich or poor, as well as common laborers (who may be free or servile). Of crucial significance, however, is this: many of the foregoing can be combined, so that the same men can be farmers and soldiers, or judges and councilors; but the same men cannot be simultaneously rich and poor. And so in an especial sense the *polis* seems to be a compound of rich and poor, and democracy and oligarchy seem to be the two basic regimes, of which all others are variations. In principle, Aristotle denies this view because the distinction between rightly constituted and wrongly constituted regimes is more fundamental for him. Yet in practice he gives the distinction between democracy and oligarchy the major weight in his approach to the problem of ameliorating political life. His best generally practicable regime is polity (*politeia*), which happens also to be the generic name for all regimes. It is no accident that the specific and the generic name should coincide in the case of the regime which is a compound of democracy and oligarchy. For it coincides in the case of the one regime which balances the two elements which alone cannot be combined. Polity is a kind of virtuous mean between the two vicious extremes constituted by the claims of wealth and poverty.

Democracies will vary as the class of the many comprising the ruling class varies, whether farmers, artisans, merchants, sailors, fishermen, or laborers predominate among them; similarly oligarchies will differ

according to the relative weight among their ruling classes of wealth, birth, virtue, and education. The different kinds of democracy vary as the principle of democracy is mitigated by the variety of interests within the *dēmos,* and the inclination to give greater protection to the interests of other classes, first by the rule of law, and second by some representation within the government of interests other than that of the dominant class. Thus the worst form of democracy would be simple, unrestrained majoritarianism, which usually means rule by the worst kind of demagogues. Better forms would, besides restraining the government by laws which circumscribed its power, give some recognition to property, either by property qualifications for the holding of some offices, or by giving some weight to property in the voting in the assembly. In Book VI there is a remarkable passage in which the concept of distributive justice, as developed in Book III, is adapted to the specific problem of tempering democracy.[36] There Aristotle proposes the following voting procedure in the assembly: let rich and poor constitute two voting classes, and let any resolution pass which commands a majority of each. But if the majority in each class is different, let the one whose total property assessment is greater prevail. For example, if on a given proposal, the rich vote six to four in favor, and the poor vote fifteen to five against, then the result would be nineteen to eleven against, on a purely majoritarian basis. If however, we assume that each rich man is twice as wealthy as each poor man, and they voted by property assessments, the vote would be twenty three to seventeen against, i.e., the minority viewpoint would increase its percentage of the vote from 37 percent to 43 percent. Aristotle's aim is *not* simply to strengthen the position of the rich by this proposal. Where the poor in a democracy are united in their views, they will prevail. In the foregoing example his proposal strengthens the position of the minority of the poor as well as the majority of the rich. Our numerical values in the examples are unrealistic, in that we supposed, for the sake of convenience, that all the rich would be equally rich and all the poor equally poor, which in practice they would not be. Aristotle's basic aim, of course, is to encourage the combination of the richer of the poor with the poorer of the rich, thus leading the poor from democracy, and the rich from oligarchy, and both into polity.

What, then, is polity, Aristotle's most generally practicable regime, the regime which can solve the fundamental problem of most *poleis?* It is, as has been said, a blend of democracy and oligarchy, and the better the blending, the easier it will be for democrats to confuse it with democracy and oligarchs with oligarchy. Its foundation is the middle class, i.e., the class that is neither very rich nor very poor, and which accordingly has no

[36] Aristotle *Politics* 1318[a] 30-38.

interest either in equality for unequals or inequality for equals. It does not wish to place property at the mercy of the propertyless, or liberty at the mercy of the propertied. Of the devices for encouraging polity, the one given above must serve as an example of Aristotle's almost limitless resources, resources which manifest themselves not only in the discussion of polity proper, but in the multitudinous ways in which he examines each of the many varieties of democracy, oligarchy, and polity, moderating the two former in the direction of polity, and the last in the direction of aristocracy. Polity, as we have seen, is inherently moderate by the moderation of the interests of the middle class. But this moderation only resembles virtue, it is not virtue itself. It makes men disposed toward virtue, however, and aristocracy can begin to flourish upon the soil of polity.

After demonstrating the variety of regimes, and in particular the varieties of democracy and oligarchy, and how the conflict arising from the irreconcilable antagonism of poor and rich can best be dealt with, Aristotle also points out the appropriateness of one or another regime to one or another people. Although polity is introduced as the generally practicable regime, it depends no less upon fortune than the best regime, in that it depends upon a large middle class, or at least upon a gentle graduation from poor to rich. Yet extremes of wealth or poverty are more the rule. Aristotle recognizes that where such extremes exist only one or another kind of democracy or oligarchy is possible. He lays it down as a principle that the part of the *polis* which wishes the regime to endure must be stronger than the parts which are hostile to it. One must in each case examine the composition of the hostile elements, which must be compounded to produce the regime for the particular *polis*. If the poor have virtuous farmers and degenerate artisans, and if the *polis* must be a democracy, obviously it must be built upon the farming class. If there are degenerate *nouveaux riches,* but there is a public-spirited, educated, old aristocracy, obviously if it is to be an oligarchy it must be constructed around the old families. Where the people are dissolute and the wealthy public-spirited, there one should have an oligarchy, unless the rich are too few and the poor too many, in which case there is no alternative to an inferior democracy. If the people are sober and hard-working and the rich are dissolute, there one should have a democracy, unless the rich are relatively numerous and the poor either relatively few or so situated that they cannot easily combine. These are the kinds of considerations which Aristotle advances for deciding, first, whether a regime should be democratic or oligarchic and, second, what variety of democracy or of oligarchy it should be.

Aristotle concludes Book IV with the first comprehensive account of what we have come to call the three "powers" of government, legisla-

tive, executive, and judicial.[37] The concept of a "power" of government is itself, of course, alien to Aristotle, because our use of that expression always implies a delegation of power from a sovereign people to a government which is its instrumentality. For Aristotle, the government (*politeuma*) is the regime (*politeia*), as we cannot too greatly emphasize. The legislative is the deliberating element of the regime, it is not an appointed or elected body deliberating *for* someone else. The idea of representation is nowhere visible in Aristotle's *Politics,* in part because a *polis* so large that it required representation would have seemed to him far too large for political excellence.[38] More important is the fact that what we call the legislative power is only one of a number of elements which in the modern representative democratic state go into the deliberative process. Elections, parties, public opinion polls, and so on, all play a part in this deliberative process. When Aristotle speaks of the deliberative element, he means the element which actually deliberates, not a body to which deliberative functions have been delegated, and which performs these not in its own right, but in virtue of the rights of others.

We cannot say more here of Aristotle's treatment of the three branches of government, other than that it is designed to give the practicing legislator a compendium of all the possible ways in which each of these branches of government can be constructed. The legislator must know not only what are the different regimes, what are their intrinsic merits and demerits, and which kind is suitable for which kind of people. He must know how to construct each regime, and in practice this means knowing how to construct a legislature, a judiciary, and a magistracy suitable to each. This means knowing not only how to construct each of the varieties of the three branches of government, but how to produce each of the varieties of mixtures of each of the branches of government. For example, it means knowing how to add a touch of oligarchy to a democratic legislature, or a touch of aristocracy to an oligarchic judiciary, or a touch of democracy to an oligarchic magistracy (this last being characteristic, for example, of Sparta). Nowhere does the resemblance of the art of the political philosopher and the art of the painter become more patent than in these practical books, wherein the variety of possible forms is seen to be so great that politics becomes as malleable as the forms of nature, when they are reconstructed from the painter's palette. And, yet, in precisely the same sense as the painter imitates nature while perfecting it, so does the political philosopher. The knowledge of nature guides and governs the application of technique at every step.

Of the practical subjects dealt with in Books IV through VI none

[37] Ibid., 1297^{b} 35ff.

[38] Cf. the criticism of Plato's *Laws,* in ibid., 1265^{a} 11ff. and the size of the best regime, 1326^{a} 7-1326^{b} 26.

are more practical than those of Book V, generally known as the book on revolutions. The word revolution has, however, a connotation for us ("drastic change" would be a better translation of *metabolē*) which is quite alien to Aristotle. When we think of the English, American, French, and Russian revolutions, for example, we usually think of a process by which all *anciens régimes,* all regimes based either upon feudal legitimacy or the prescription of ancient customs, are being caused to disappear from the modern world. We think of the replacement of regimes explicitly based upon one or another principle of inequality by regimes all claiming to be based upon equality.[39] We think of a world in which the dynamism of social change culminating in political revolution is rooted in technological change, itself the by-product of a continually progressing body of what we call scientific knowledge. Aristotle's horizon is one in which man's knowledge of nature does not alter the fundamental character of his relations with nonhuman nature, or his relations with his fellow men. The moral and political alternatives remain basically constant. For Aristotle revolution means primarily the process whereby one regime is replaced by another, as one or another group gains power within the same regime, or as the regime is altered so as no longer to be the same. Aristotle remarks that, in his own time (and he evidently means in Greece), with the growth in the size of the class of the common people, it is hard for any kind of government other than democracy to come into existence.[40] Evidently external conditions may impose sharp limits upon the political choices open at any given time and place. But everything that comes into existence passes out of existence, and although regimes are not strictly speaking mortal, neither are they immortal. External conditions are subject to fortune, and in the fullness of time all possibilities become actualities. Aristotle's horizon envisages as an ultimate possibility the transformation of every regime, through every other regime, into every regime. Book V of the *Politics,* is, then, not a book on revolutions in the sense that Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* is such a book. According to Tocqueville, the progress of the principle of equality, the leveling of all monarchical and aristocratic regimes, is providential and inexorable. The only practical question is whether we adapt ourselves to it in one way or another. For Aristotle there are six principal kinds of regimes, a large number of variants of each, and an almost unlimited number of combinations of variants. The problem of revolution is the problem of knowing what preserves and what destroys each of them.

[39] The National Socialist and Fascist regimes, now happily defunct, are only apparent exceptions. Although reviving a kind of primitive tribalism, their use of the plebiscite to establish legitimacy placed them in fundamental opposition to premodern inegalitarians.

[40] Aristotle *Politics* 1286^{b} 20.

Book V is the longest of the entire *Politics,* illustrated as it is with a wealth of detail from the political histories of the Greek world that Aristotle had collected. We can do no more here than indicate the scope of the book, and provide an example of how the political philosopher teaches legislators to preserve the regimes he has taught them to construct. The questions Aristotle takes up are these: what are the numbers and kinds of causes of revolutions in general; what causes are peculiar to each kind of regime; out of what into what do regimes usually change; what are the safeguards of regimes in general and of each kind in particular; how are these safeguards put into effect?

The first and most fundamental cause of revolution is identical with the primary cause of the difference of regimes: namely, the different conceptions men have of justice. Those who are equal in one respect think they are equal in all; those who are unequal in one think they are unequal in all. For this reason democrats are the enemies of oligarchs, and oligarchs of democrats, and each will overthrow the other when he can. Yet within democracy and within oligarchy there are those who think they have not got their fair share according to the principle of the regime. And again, there are those who wish to make the democracy more (or less) democratic, or the oligarchy more (or less) oligarchic.

Revolutions originate often in trivial incidents, but these are only the sparks which set the dry tinder aflame. The sense of oppression of the people by the wealthy few, or the sense of dishonor by the few when they are treated as the equals of those they deem their inferiors, this exemplifies the inflammable material. In democracies, for example, the principal cause of revolution—that is, of the rich banding together to overthrow the democracy—is the insolence of demagogues, who court popularity by instituting malicious prosecutions of the rich and stimulating class hatred. In the case of oligarchies, oppression of the poor by the rich corresponds to demagogy. However, it may be the excessive exclusiveness of the oligarchy that drives some of the notables into rebellion against their own class. Again, oligarchies are ruined by riotous living, driving them into oppression and tyranny because of their extravagance, while making themselves contemptible to their rivals, both in their own class and among the people.

As to the things that tend to secure regimes in general, they are the opposite of the things that tend to their destruction. We saw that differences as to what is just are the most fundamental of all causes of dissension. The fundamental cause of security, to be briefer even than Aristotle in this context, is justice. That is, democracies are preserved by refraining from anything that smacks of expropriation, while oligarchies are preserved by the rulers refraining from insolence and oppression. The

legislator must know what institutions in a democracy preserve, and what destroy democracy; and what institutions in an oligarchy preserve, and what destroy oligarchy. For example, it is a legitimate aim of oligarchy that superior men not be governed by inferior, and of democracy that freemen have an equal opportunity to share in offices. The two can often be practically reconciled, Aristotle points out, by scrupulous care that no profit is made from public office. If this is achieved, then the poor will relinquish the offices to the rich, since, being poor, they will prefer to devote themselves to their private affairs so long as they think the public funds are not being plundered. And the rich, while not denying offices to the poor, will actually have the offices to themselves. Every *polis* needs both a free multitude and a wealthy minority, and if the poor destroy the rich, or the rich the poor, they will destroy the basis of the common good. The greatest of all means of securing the stability of regimes, Aristotle says, is education. For there is no use in the best possible laws and institutions if the citizens are not trained in their use. But a good education does not mean one that will please oligarchs in an oligarchy, or democrats in a democracy. It means an education that will produce a ruling class that is self-disciplined in respect to its real interests, and not self-indulgent in respect to its pleasures.

Aristotle has a great deal to say about how polities, aristocracies, monarchies, and tyrannies are both destroyed and preserved. Some of the most startling passages in the *Politics* take the form of advice for preserving tyrannies. Tyranny is in one sense no regime, since it is the negation of justice, and regimes are generally understood in terms of their having an element—however incomplete or partial—of justice. But Aristotle takes it for granted that in some cases nothing but tyranny will be possible, and his advice, while calculated to appeal to a tyrant who is rational enough to consider what is in his interest, is also calculated to introduce, however covertly, an element of justice which makes it bearable to consider the tyranny a regime.

In summary, we can describe the spirit and doctrine of the practical books of the *Politics* as follows. Aristotle envisages each kind of regime as being appropriate to a certain set of circumstances. In the case of a people with a wealthy class of ancient lineage, with a tradition of public service and spirit of *noblesse oblige,* an oligarchy, or perhaps an aristocracy, is indicated. In the case of a people whose rich are mostly *nouveaux,* who lack traditions, and who are held in contempt by the common people, aristocracy is out of the question, and oligarchy is doubtful. The same would be true of an ancient ruling class which had grown effete and luxurious. On the other hand, a common people made up largely of sturdy yeoman farmers is much better material for democ-

racy than a *dēmos* of idle artisans, avidly looking for pay from the public treasury as an excuse to leave their work tables. In each situation we must look first for that class which is naturally strongest. If it is the *dēmos,* we must try to build a democracy; if the wealthy, an oligarchy. And if the class that is between rich and poor is sufficiently numerous, we should try to build a polity. But in enfranchising a ruling class, we must always look for those devices which moderate it in the direction of its natural opposite: that is, devices for admitting the poor to office in an oligarchy, devices for honoring the rich in a democracy; and, in a polity, devices for rewarding virtue, or making virtue honored. For polity, although a balance of two bad principles, secures a moderation which permits the recognition of virtue or merit, and this strengthens the foundation of the regime. But the teaching of these books is alive to the mutability of human things, as well as being encyclopedic. Aristotle warns the legislator to be on the lookout for change, not to oppose change per se, but to prevent evils when they are small and still manageable, and constantly to prepare the regime to assimilate changes worked by fortune which are beyond control.

Nothing better illustrates Aristotle's practical teaching than the contrast between the British and continental European ruling classes in the modern centuries. From the days of Henry VIII, or earlier, the general (if not invariable) practice of the British monarchy and aristocracy has been to co-opt the leading members of the newer classes. Britain has always had a ruling class, and it is scarcely less recognizable today than it was four hundred years ago. Feudal overlords have been replaced by merchant princes, by industrialists and financiers, and by leaders of organized labor, by a process in which the old and new have rarely been out of touch and have rarely ceased to share in power and responsibility. The French and Russian monarchies and aristocracies, on the other hand, would not bend and were compelled instead to break. These *anciens régimes* never learned Aristotle's lesson, that a regime must always be constituted by the strongest element in the *polis,* and that the political strength of an element, whether the people, the rich, the well born, or the good, is a product of its quantity and its quality. This is a nonmathematical product, but the true statesman must nonetheless master this political computation. He must perceive what adjustments must be made in a regime when there is outside the ruling class a quantity so large or a quality so potent that it would ruin if it could not rule. But political computation is not limited to perceiving and judging these invincible products. The introduction of either a new quantity or a new quality into a regime must be done in such wise that the quantity realizes that it becomes a genuine political factor only by its infusion with quality, and quality realizes that it becomes such a factor only as it infuses a quantity.

The common good is always a compound of both, and only as there is a common good is there a regime, and a partnership in the good life.

The last two books of the *Politics*—Book VII, and Book VIII as it has come down to us—are the books par excellence on the best regime. As we have seen, the best regime is the implicit subject of every book. In Book I, the understanding of the generation of the *polis* implied an understanding of its perfection—i.e., the best regime—because to understand the generation of anything that exists by nature means to understand the activity of that thing when it has attained its perfection. And the great thesis of Book I, or one form of it, is that the *polis* exists by nature. Book II examined a number of regimes, both of theory and of practice, and they were found wanting. But the principle in virtue of which Aristotle noted those deficiencies was the principle of the best regime. Book III culminated in the examination of the principal rival claims to supreme power in the *polis,* the claims of the poor, the rich, the well born, and the good. The reconciliation of these claims, their harmonization into a common good, itself constituted the principle of the best regime. Books IV, V, and VI demonstrate the different manners in which this reconciliation or harmonization takes place when external conditions forbid its full implementation. Or, to be more precise, the practical books demonstrate the different forms that justice takes when conditions make the predominant factor in the product of quantity and quality something other than virtue. For example, pure democracy or pure oligarchy are in a sense not viable regimes at all. No *polis* can exist without a freeborn and a wealthy element, and a regime which simply despoiled its rich, or enslaved its free, would cease to exist as a community. Only the moderation of the claims of the rich or the poor enables democracy or oligarchy to be viable, and that moderation is the ground of the intrusion of virtue. But there is a difference between that intrusion of virtue which enables a democracy to exist, and a recognition of virtue as the only cause of that activity for the sake of which every *polis* exists, and which alone can cause it to be, not only a rich or a free *polis,* but a happy one.

The books on the best regime consist in the main of these two subjects: first, what it is that is the cause of happiness, in men and in *poleis;* second, what are the institutions of the best regime. The best regime is one in which the best men rule. Each regime is *just,* let us remember, insofar as it is rightly constituted, insofar as it secures the common good as defined by the greatest product of quality and quantity that fortune permits a given community to enjoy. Where fortune permits the qualitative factor to dominate the quantitative factor, that is, where human excellence dominates civic excellence, there is the best regime.

Aristotle turns aside as practically irrelevant the question of whether that regime is best in which one man so greatly exceeds all others in virtue that no proportional equality is possible.[41] For all practical purposes, the best regime appears to be an aristocracy of a multitude of good men ruled by law. Aristotle discusses the material elements of the best regime, which are its resources of land, its location, access to the sea, market places, and so on, and the human stock from which the legislator must raise up citizens. The formal elements are the classes of farmers, artisans, fighters, the wealthy, those performing civic functions, and those providing the services to the gods. Wealth, military service, civic duty, and religious duty all coincide in a single ruling class. When its members are younger they are soldiers, when in middle age councillors, magistrates, and judges, and when in old age priests. The farm laborers are explicitly servile and the artisans apparently so, although Aristotle does say that all slaves should have freedom set before them as a prize.

Throughout the *Politics* Aristotle usually speaks of virtue in contradistinction to birth, wealth, freedom, and other conditional claims to political preference. Yet fundamental to Aristotle's political teaching is the distinction between the virtue of a citizen and that of a good man, and there is a constant interplay between these two meanings of virtue. The virtue of a citizen relates to the regime, and its purpose will differ from the purpose of true virtue in every regime but the best. For example, in a democracy happiness will appear to be doing as one pleases, in an oligarchy it will appear rather as the gratification of avarice. A happy man *does* do as he pleases, but it pleases him only to do good. A happy man also possesses wealth, but he will desire not an unlimited amount of wealth, but only so much as is needed for good actions. At last, however, we must ask, What limit does the desire of happiness place upon the need or desire of good actions? Good actions require only a limited amount both of wealth and freedom. But there can be no limit upon the desire for good action itself. The final problem of the *Politics* is the problem of establishing clearly that distinction within true virtue itself which throughout the *Politics* remained almost invisible: the distinction between the virtue of action—moral virtue plus practical wisdom—and the virtue of thought—theoretical wisdom. And, corresponding to these two virtues are the two activities, of the active and of the contemplative life. Political virtue, which in the best case appears to coincide with human virtue, is practical: that is, it is concerned with the good things that can be gained, and the bad things that can be avoided, by wise action and the practice of the moral virtues. But there is always a limit to the goodness resulting from good action of this kind. To extend practical activity beyond the

[41] Ibid., 1332^{b} 16-27.

bounds of this limit is to turn it from good to evil. For example, it is good to be brave and strong, for the weak and cowardly cannot preserve their freedom, and the unfree cannot live good lives. But those who are strong and free, and whose strength and freedom are unchallenged, cannot utilize either their strength or freedom in action. To go into action to dominate others, merely to exercise one's freedom of action and one's bravery, is a perversion of virtue; this was the defect of the Spartan regime. Virtuous activity cannot, then, be truly practical, except as it serves an end which is itself not practical, an activity which is good solely with reference to itself, an activity to which there are no limits because its increase does not extend it beyond itself, an activity which is thus wholly self-contained. This is the activity of thought, the contemplation of the truth, which is the same as the activity of God, or thought thinking itself. It is the only absolutely self-contained, self-sufficient activity in the universe, and for this reason unlimited, while being the cause of those limits which prescribe boundaries to every other activity, and in virtue of which every other activity becomes good.[42]

The final cause of excellence, in politics and in human life, as in the universe, is, then, ultimately one and the same. Yet the same man cannot be simply virtuous (which means wise) and politically virtuous, for the same reason that the divine activity is not simultaneously practical and theoretical. The activity of wisdom, pure and simple, is self-regarding and not other-regarding. Yet political rulers must have the spirit and practice of philosophy, which means love of wisdom, as distinct from wisdom itself. The solution of the political problem, in Aristotle no less than in Plato, requires a certain coincidence of philosophy and political power. But for Aristotle, unlike Plato, the activity of wisdom itself issues no commands, although it does always indicate the reason why commands should be issued. There is, then, no such necessary antagonism between philosophy and political life as Plato envisaged. Practical life culminates in the recognition of the activity of wisdom as its final cause.[43]

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle expounded the different meanings of virtue, and above all the distinction between the moral and intellectual virtues. In Book X he defended happiness as primarily the activity of theoretical wisdom, and in a secondary sense as the activity of the practical and moral virtues. Finally, he observed that the conditions of happiness, the possibility of the good life, depended upon good laws, and this required the science of politics. At the end of the *Politics* Aristotle

[42] Cf. Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1072^{b} 13-29, and *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177^{a} 17-1177^{b} 26, 1178^{b} 7-23, with *Politics* 1323^{b} 23-27, and 1325^{b} 14-31. Compare also the treatment of self-love in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 1166^{a} 1ff.

[43] Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1144^{b} 30-1145^{a} 11.

considers how the good men who are to make the good laws of the best regime are themselves to be produced. When the eighth book breaks off, either unfinished or lost, he is still engaged in describing the education which will produce the habits of virtue. Fortunately, we already know what these habits are and how they are produced, in principle if not in detail. The end of the *Politics* leads us back to the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics.*